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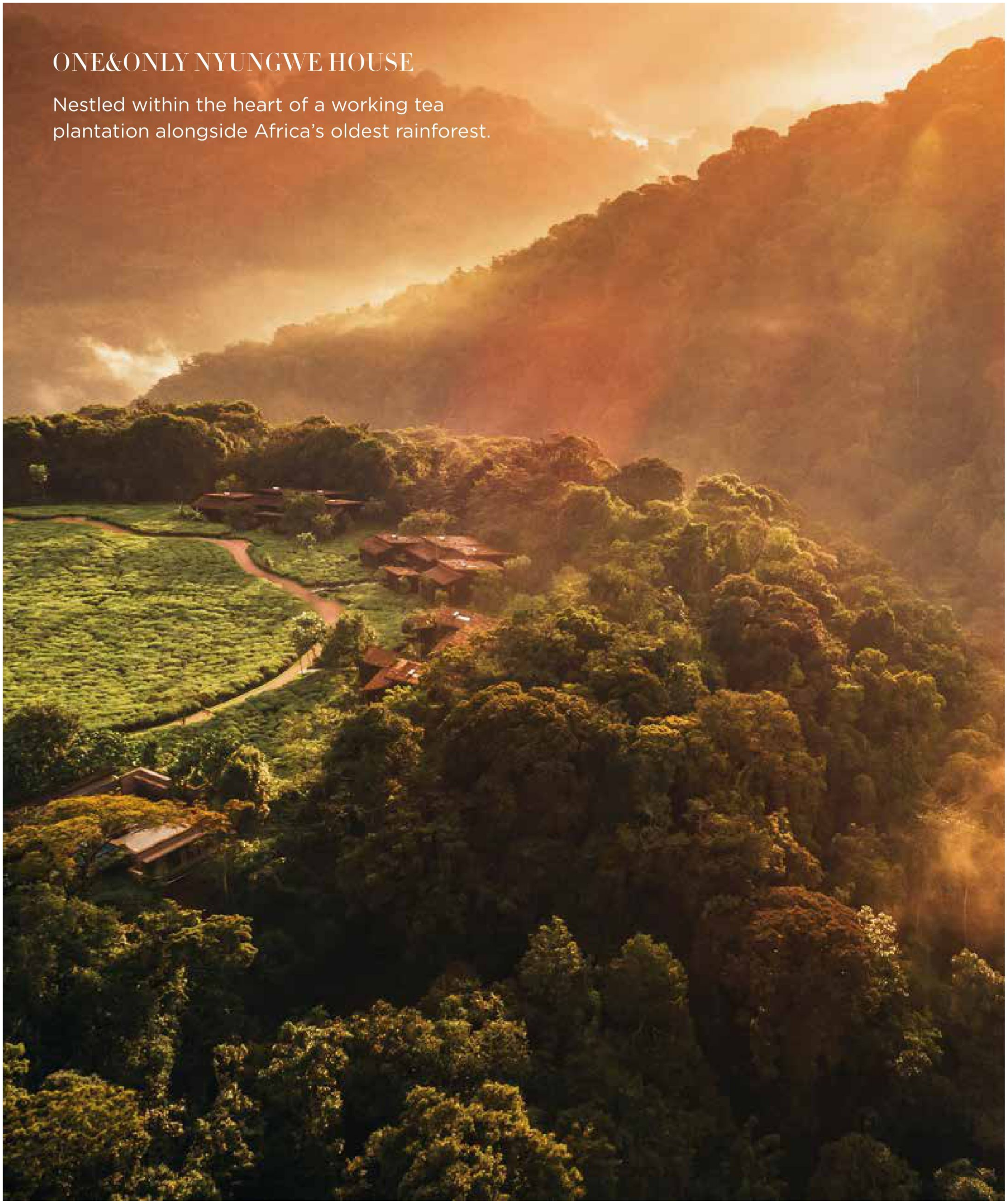

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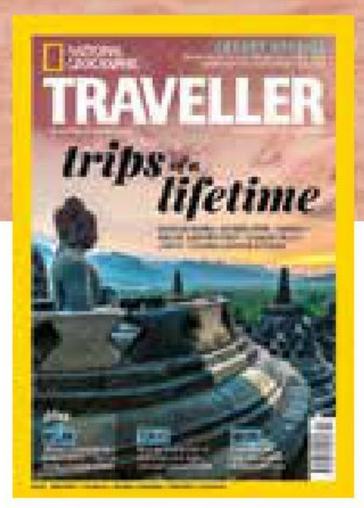
IMAGE: YULIA DENISYUK



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Buddha statue, Borobudur Temple, Java, Indonesia
IMAGE: AWL Images

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CMH SUMMER ADVENTURES

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Emma Gregg

At a time when many of the world's forests are shrinking, Rwanda is replanting trees. This, to me, is its magic. It's a superbly optimistic place to see forest wildlife, including, of course, mountain gorillas and chimps. **RWANDA P.102**

Pól Ó Conghaile

Everyone can conjure up a romantic vision of Croatia's glittering Dalmatian coastline. But what about the hinterland? I went to explore the landscapes, food and culture of this off-the-radar destination — and meet the people who call it home. **CROATIA P.114**

Julia Buckley

I've always found the idea of Milan's fashion scene slightly unnerving, but was amazed to discover it's warm and welcoming. Culture and fashion have been linked here for centuries, and that's paying off with a heap of galleries and design tie-ins. **MILAN P.140**

Sarah Barrell

Toronto's pop-up cityscape is Canada's most distinctive urban skyline, but look beyond the chrome and glass, and you'll find clean green life being breathed into old industrial spaces, and a lakeshore that's now a summer playground. **TORONTO P.150**

Francisca Kellett

Combining conservation with travel might sound a bit worthy, but when you get to help tranquillise, de-horn and re-release a rhino in the wild, you realise the positive impact your travels can have. **PHILANTHROPY P.192**

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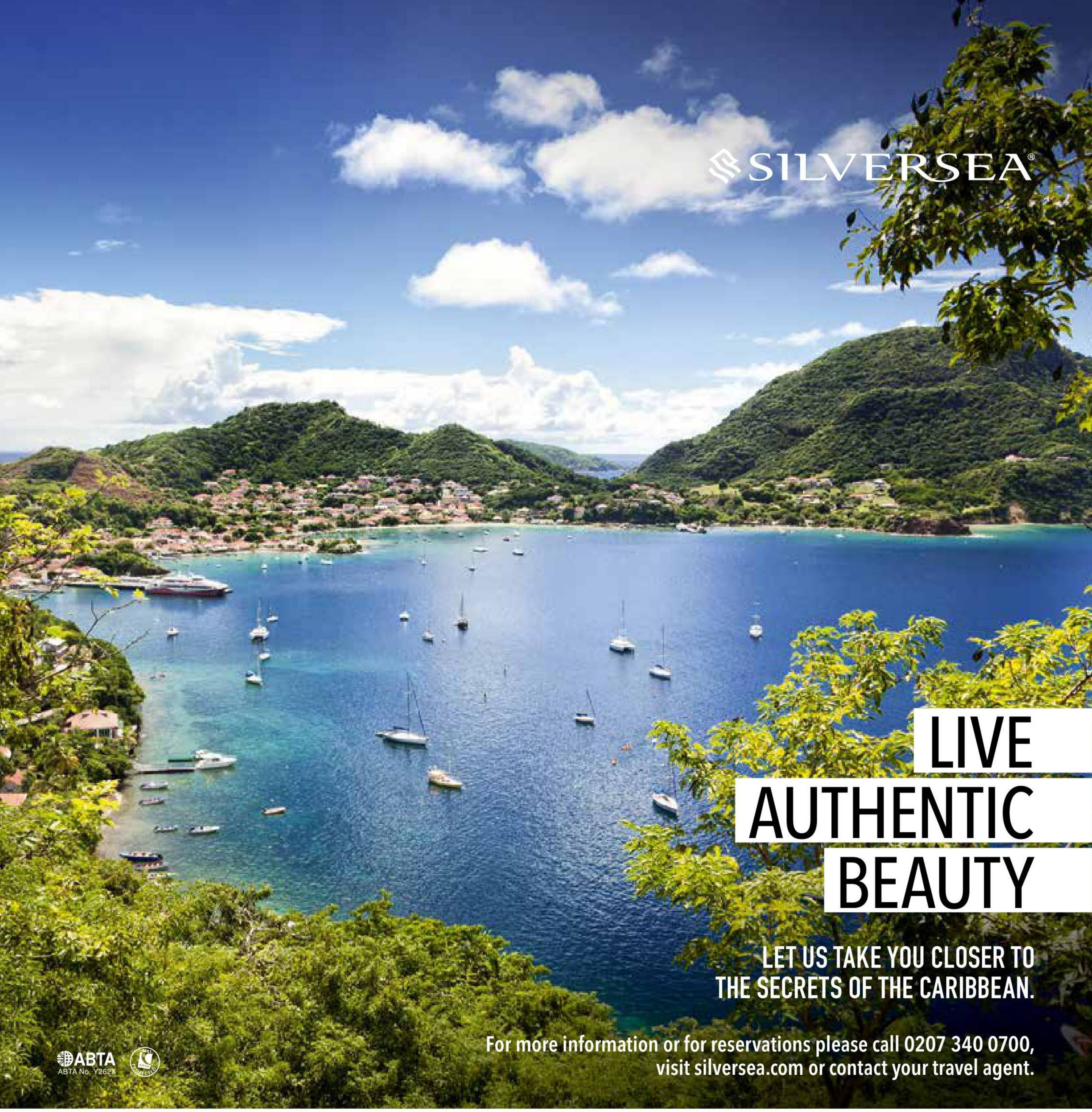

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Editor's letter

We don't generally talk about trips of a lifetime in *National Geographic Traveller*. Or bucket lists. Or places to see before you die. Because somehow doing so can trivialise travel, reducing the world to a shopping list of spots to tick off.

Shuffling along in a queue, waiting to see the Mona Lisa at the Louvre was that moment for me — a bucket list experience that fell a long way short of my expectations. Travel is a subjective thing, of course, so when it's reduced to looking at something devoid of that personal connection it can lose its appeal. Which is why our Trips of a Lifetime list encompasses destinations such as Japan and Hawaii, along with landmark attractions like the Grand Canyon, Great Barrier Reef and Bolivia's salt flats — natural wonders you can discover for yourself, hopefully minus the queues and ticket offices.

Many, like Iguazu Falls and Borobudur are far-flung — these are trips of a lifetime, after all — but many, like Stonehenge and Pompeii, are close to home: life-changing places right on your doorstep.

Our selection has been carefully picked by our team of editors and writers, who concluded that while these are trips of a lifetime, they're not necessarily once in a lifetime; the grandeur of these destinations and sights means that many warrant repeat visits.

PAT RIDDELL, EDITOR

@patriddell
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HIGHLIGHTS

National Geographic Traveller Food Festival

Not got your ticket yet? There's still time to grab yours to our first-ever food festival (p.12)

The Masterclasses 2019

Our popular day of expert-led photography and travel writing sessions is back for another year on 6 October (p.45)

Reader Awards 2019

Have your say and be in with the chance to win some fantastic prizes, including a getaway to the Dominican Republic (p.54)

Travel Writing Competition

Time's running out to submit your stories in our annual competition. Tell us your tales for a chance to see your name in print (p.178)

AWARD-WINNING NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER

French Travel Media Awards 2019: Best Art & Culture Feature • British Guild of Travel Writers Awards 2018: Best Travel Writer • Travel Media Awards 2018: Consumer Writer of the Year • AITO Travel Writer of the Year Awards 2018: Travel Blogger of the Year • Visit USA Media Awards 2018: Best Consumer Travel Magazine Feature • BSME Talent Awards 2018: Best Designer • LATA Media Awards 2018: Consumer Magazine Feature of the Year • French Travel Media Awards 2018: Best Wine & Gastronomy Feature • NATJA Travel Media Awards 2017: Photography: Overall Excellence — Print Publication • British Travel Awards 2017: Best Consumer Holiday Magazine • British Guild of Travel Writers Awards 2017: Best Travel Writer • British Guild of Travel Writers Awards 2016: Best Travel Writer • British Travel Awards 2015: Best Consumer Holiday Magazine

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Cradled in the foothills of the Truong Son mountains, with a prehistoric geothermal spring nearby, this elegant five-star property combines a superior resort experience with complimentary spa treatments and the first Japanese onsen in Vietnam.

Rich with minerals and boasting an optimal pH balance, the Thanh Tan hot spring spouts from the earth just metres from Alba's open-plan bungalows and contemporary Japanese-style rooms. Through immaculate gardens of bamboo and eucalyptus, the waters twist and turn and swirl with steam, eventually arriving at open-air pools or at Alba's unique onsen bathing house.

With Thanh Tan at the core of the resort's wellness philosophy, guests are invited to embrace an energising spa-fuelled lifestyle free from distraction. Surrounded by tropical forests, tumbling waterfalls, and the sights, sounds and smells of nature, experience true *sanus per aquam*, as the Romans once said — Health through water.

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EDITORS' PICKS

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HERE'S WHAT THE *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER FOOD* TEAM ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING, AND TASTING, AT THE FESTIVAL

SCREEN TO STAGE

As a fan of *MasterChef* in all its forms, I'm really excited so many people who've appeared on the show will be taking part in the Festival, including **John Torode**. Having watched these talented chefs and broadcasters on screen, I'm looking forward to seeing them in person as they share their food stories and prepare dishes they love.
Nicola Trup, deputy editor

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

Whenever I've attended food events in the past, I've always made a beeline for the stands serving wine. No matter how much you think you know about wine, there's always more to learn, so I'll be dropping by the **Wine Society's** stand to hear about food pairings and wine regions, and, just maybe, a spot of sampling too.
Glen Mutel, editor

JOIN THE Q

I've been keen to hear chef **Josh Katz** speak ever since I ate at his fabulous Middle Eastern restaurant, Berber & Q, in Haggerston. After all, anyone whose food leaves me that happy has certainly got my attention. I'm particularly eager to learn his secret for making the best cauliflower shawarma I've ever had.
Lauren Gamp, designer

GOING GREEK

Greek food is what dreams are made of — well, my dreams, at least. My favourite dish is dolmades: little parcels of lamb, rice and herbs, wrapped in vine leaves, ideally served with a dollop of yoghurt and lemon juice. You'll no doubt find me chomping on these fragrant appetisers at the **Greece** stand in the exhibition hall.
Farida Zeynalova, assistant editor

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SNAPSHOT

Buyankhuu, Emeelt, Mongolia

Buyankhuu is the rail station controller in Emeelt, a small village 18 miles west of the capital, Ulaanbaatar. The village is home to a tiny population of Mongolians who live in Western-style houses as well as nomadic *gers* (portable tents). The station itself is approached down a rough dirt track, and inside little has changed since the 1970s, including the mint-green waiting room with its plastic seats. She told me that she completed a 45-day railway station controller course when she finished school and has worked for Mongolian Railways since 1995. On the day I met her, she had her hands full with some rather unusual controller duties — including keeping a bunch of wildly drunk Mongolians off the train tracks.

SIMON URWIN // PHOTOGRAPHER

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Editors' picks

FAMILY MATTERS

Fancy wildlife spotting in Alaska's national parks, or sumo wrestling lessons in Japan? National Geographic Expeditions' new roster of 12 family itineraries will be led by trained local guides when they launch in March 2020. *travelwithnatgeo.co.uk* **MARIA PIERI**

From cultural happenings to ultra-cool openings, our team have unearthed the latest travel highlights

WITH ART AND SOUL

Titanes, a public art initiative championing social inclusion in Spain's La Mancha region, has become the world's largest urban art museum — 14 artists and 450 people with disabilities contributed to the project. *iamtitanes.com* **TAMSIN WRESSELL**

BLACK GOLD

Klatch Coffee in San Francisco is selling what it says is the world's priciest coffee. Priced at $75 (£59) per cup and $803 (£630) per pound, the dark stuff uses Panama's very rare Elida Geisha Natural beans. *klatchroasting.com* **ZANE HENRY**

New photographic favourites

TALLINN

Expect exhibitions, a design store, meeting spaces and more when Stockholm-based Fotografiska opens a branch in the Estonian capital on 19 June. *fotografiska.com*

BRISTOL

The Royal Photographic Society recently relocated to Bristol's creative quarter, Printworks, where a gallery, auditorium and education centre are all open to the public. *rps.org*

ARLES

The Les Recontres d'Arles photography festival marks its 50th anniversary this year with a host of exhibitions. 1 July-22 September. *rencontres-arles.com* **SARAH BARRELL**

IN NUMBERS

STATUE OF LIBERTY

18 May
the date the new Statue of Liberty Museum opened this year

4.3 million
the number of annual visitors

$25.50
the price of an adult ticket for visiting Liberty and Ellis Islands

1886
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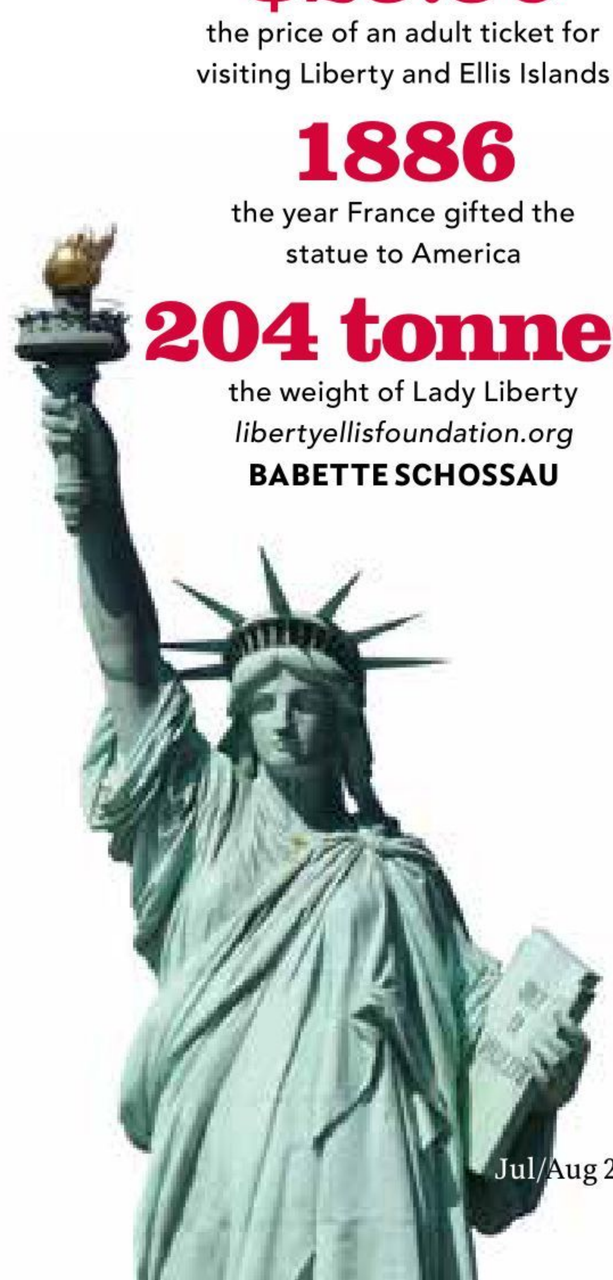

IMAGES: @KLATCHROASTING; GETTY

BIG PICTURE

Cabo de Palos, Spain

Timoncap is an open-water swimming competition held off Cabo de Palos, close to the city of Cartagena in the Spanish region of Murcia. Competitors set off from the port and swim a little more than two miles around the cape before finishing at Playa de Levante. This was the first time I'd photographed the event, and as the swimmers began to dive in and take their places, I dashed to the starting point. The whole place was heaving with spectators and well-wishers but I managed to squeeze my way to the front and position myself just a few metres from the competitors as they got going — the best place from which to snap a shot of the action.

SERGIO FERREIRA RUIZ // PHOTOGRAPHER

@sefegram

As shortlisted in the Open competition of the 2019 Sony World Photography Awards in the 'Motion' category.

Isle of Wight

STYLE-ON-SEA

The island's getting its sandy chic on this summer with a raft of new openings including the UK's 'first beach club'

Panoramic views of the English Channel may not be a boast most beach clubs can make, but Origin can do just that when it opens in July in Sandown, on the Isle of Wight's southeast coast.

Led by Ana Lucia, formerly with luxury hospitality company Nikki Beach and Puerto Banús' legendary Ocean Club Marbella, Origin is the first of its kind in the UK. The site comes complete with surf, sand, a swimming pool, restaurant-bars, and some determinedly chic accommodation — plus private yacht moorings to come.

Expect just 24 boutique bedrooms with cool nautical tones, some with balconies where hot tubs enjoy ocean — well, Channel — views.

Guests can don a pastel surf poncho by local label Rapanui, settle at a bar stool (inside or out: this is a beach club, after all), order a plate of island seafood, which will undoubtedly transcend the ubiquitous crab sarnie, and a glass of Laurent-Perrier, with whom Origin is rumoured to be partnered, and lap up the island's newest lux opening. And in true beach club style, music will come from live bands and top DJs. Who needs Marbella? Rooms start at £350, B&B. *originbeachclub.com* *visitisleofwight.co.uk* **SARAH BARRELL**

ISLAND OPENINGS

The Hut
Colwell Bay welcomes this low-key luxe beach restaurant back for another season, with a new hospitality academy to foster local talent and menus revolving around the island's wealth of produce. Main courses from £15. *thehutcolwell.co.uk*

St Helen's Resort
Within flip-flopping distance of the secluded Priory Bay, two- and three-bedroom beach lodges and luxe caravans are the name of the game here, clustered around a swimming pool. From £147. *ariaresorts.co.uk*

Tom's Ecolodge
More of a country bumpkin than a beach bum? Head inland to these geodesic domes surrounded by the rolling hills of Tapnell Farm. Bed down in safari-style tents, cabins or pods. From £90. *tomsecolodge.com*

IMAGES: GETTY; ANDIE MOORE; ROBIN BALL

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Singapore

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

Having picked up a string of accolades, Singapore's Changi Airport just got even more spectacular

How do you improve the world's best airport? Just ask the architects behind Jewel, the much-awaited addition to Singapore's Changi Airport.

The island state's gateway has been voted the world's best a respectable six times by airport reviewer Skytrax, but it hasn't rested on its laurels. Instead, after nearly five years of construction, Jewel Changi Airport has finally opened its doors to take the award-winning hub to new levels. Passengers can now linger amid dining spots, hotels, boutiques, art installations, a maze and a cinema, all clustered in a futuristic space that's set to make the airport a destination in its own right for both local Singaporeans and travellers-in-transit alike.

But for the most striking feature of the S$1.7bn (£1bn) complex, travellers should look up. A giant, bagel-shaped glass roof crowns the airport, its design inspired by Singapore's mantra of being a 'city within a garden'. Imagine a vivarium-meets-the-Louvre: a crisscrossing canopy of glass and steel, concealing a lush 'magical garden' (as described by its architect, the renowned Moshe Safdie), dotted with ponds, sculptures and walking trails. It's also home to the world's largest indoor waterfall: a rainwater cascade falling 130ft from an oculus in the ceiling into a pool below. By night, however, it takes on another guise altogether as the Rain Vortex. This mesmeric sound-and-light show kicks off after dark, and sees multicoloured projections cast onto the column of tumbling water.

DID YOU KNOW?
Jewel's specially designed exterior transmits light and reduces heat intake, allowing the plants inside to flourish within regulated temperatures

For travellers bumping the airport to the top of their Singapore itinerary, there's even a chance for an early check-in with over 20 different carriers, including British Airways and Singapore Airlines. For the passengers just passing through, however, you'll need to plan ahead — the airport recommends a stopover of at least five hours to clear customs and make the most of Jewel's sparkling new offerings.

jewelchangiairport.com safdiearchitects.com wetdesign.com **CONNOR MCGOVERN**

IMAGE: GETTY

INNOVATIVE AIRPORTS

THE TECHY ONE

LGW

Passengers at Gatwick will be able to have their cars securely parked by robots from this summer. It'll massively boost the number of parking spaces, but let's just hope their parallel parks are as good as yours. *gatwickairport.com*

THE MUSICAL ONE

LAX

Los Angeles' airport is getting tuneful for another year. LAX Presents sees nearly 40 musicians staged across its terminals until December, covering genres as diverse as the city itself: from jazz piano to bossa nova. *lawa.org*

THE SOCIAL ONE

ICN

A cast of helpful android assistants arrived at Incheon Airport in Seoul last year to help passengers. The savvy AIRSTAR robots can direct passengers to departure gates and check-in desks. *airport.kr*

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Apollo 11 anniversary

ONE GIANT LEAP

20 July marks 50 years since the first Moon landing, and celebrations are underway on both sides of the Atlantic

Texas

Space Center Houston is aiming for the stars with nine days of celebratory events, including pop-up Apollo 11-themed science labs, screenings, expert talks, mission briefings for the Moon shot, an evening with an Apollo flight director and behind-the-scenes tours of the Apollo Mission Control Center. 16-24 July. *spacecenter.org/apollo-50*

Cheshire

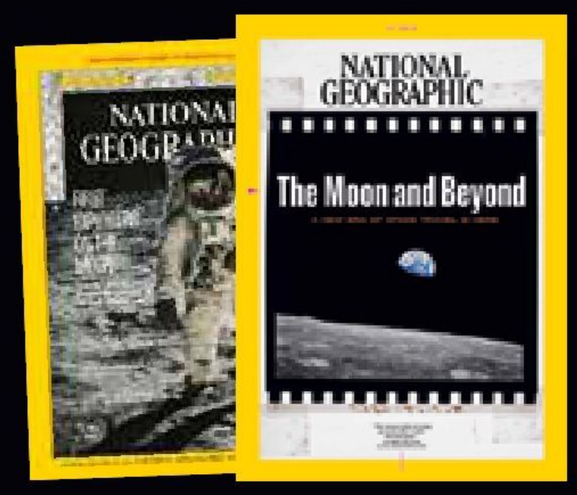
The home of British astronomy, Jodrell Bank, is reliving the Apollo 11 mission in real time as part of the Bluedot Festival, using video and audio captured by its telescope. Britain's first astronaut, Helen Sharman, will also be giving a talk on her eight days aboard Mir space station in 1991. 18-21 July. *discoverthebluedot.com*

Florida

Celebrate the Apollo programme where it — literally — took off. The Kennedy Space Center's full summer of events include a recreation of the launch and a reopening of the Apollo/Saturn V Center (a museum whose centrepiece is a restored Saturn V launch vehicle). *kennedyspacecenter.com*

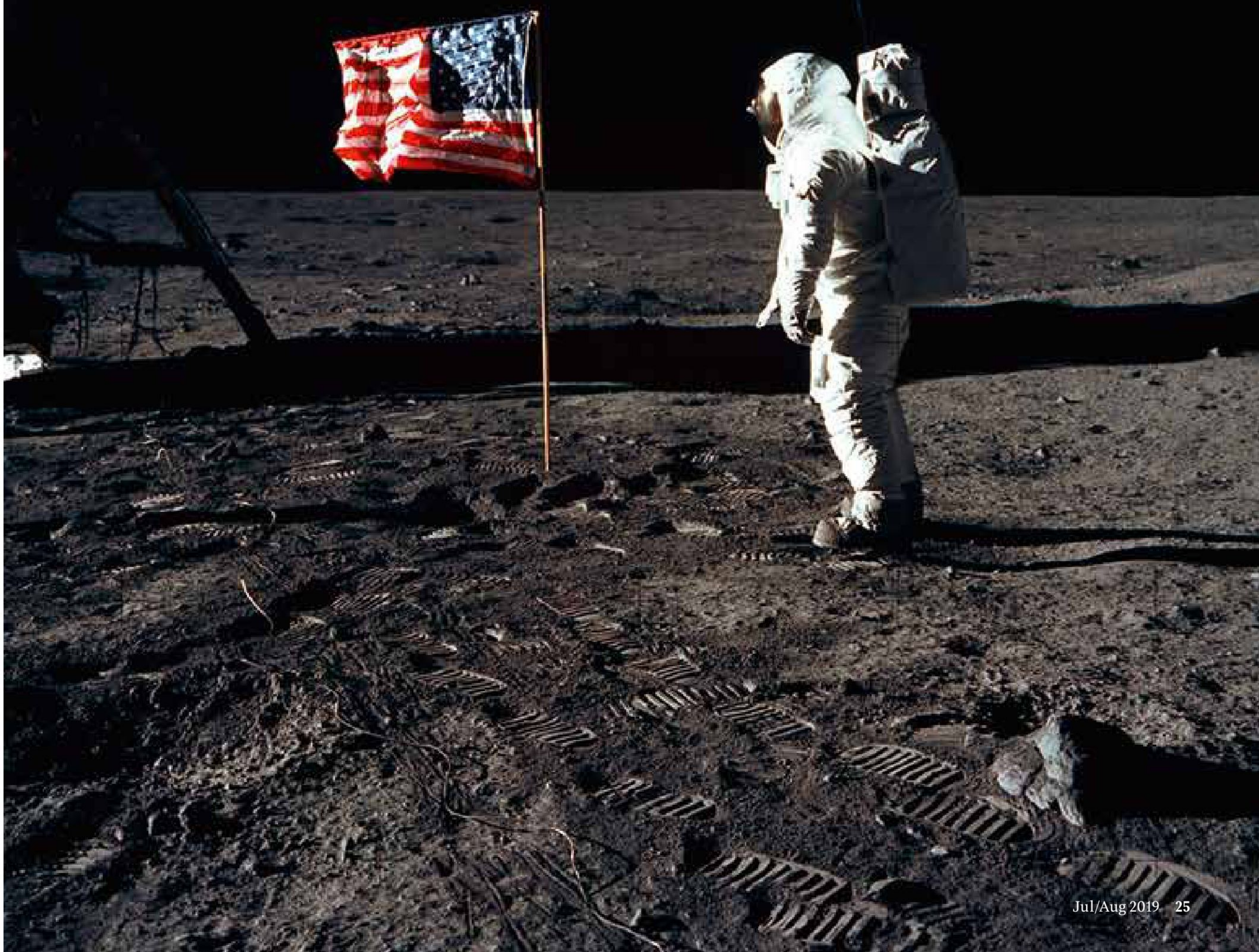
London

The after-dark Moon Festival (19-26 July) is marking the occasion with Moon-themed art exhibitions, lectures and screenings and even a club night beneath the *Cutty Sark*. At the Barbican Centre, meanwhile, the London Contemporary Orchestra will be performing Clint Mansell's score from 2009 sci-fi flick *Moon* side by side with a screening. 19 July. *moonfestival.co.uk barbican.org*



READ MORE

To celebrate, *National Geographic* is republishing the original coverage from December 1969 as part of a supplement with the Moon-themed July issue (available 2 July).



WORDS: CONNOR MCGOVERN. IMAGE: GETTY

Running tours

MAKE A DASH FOR IT

Want to exercise mind and body on your travels? Join a running tour and learn all about the sites as you pass them by

Running tours are no longer the preserve of marathoners; more casual contenders are joining the race, too. “Many clients simply want to exercise and experience a new destination with a fun and friendly local,” says Lena Andersson, CEO and founder of Go! Running Tours. “Our tours range from 5km to over 25k, so if you’re a beginner, there’s the option of choosing one of the shorter tours.” Runners are likely to learn something, too, as many of the guides are experts in a particular field. One of the company’s New York tours is led by a Broadway actress/producer, and an architect serves as a guide for its running tours in Florence. There’s the chance to glimpse herds of a giraffes up close — a common site for joggers on the Ngong Hills tour in Kenya. *gorunningtours.com* **SAM LEWIS**

THREE TO TRY... SPRINTS IN THE CITY

COPENHAGEN

Take in the Danish capital’s sights on the go. Looking for fun more than fitness? Try The Pub Run, with tastings at five pubs, or the atmospheric Night Run. From £43. *runningtours.dk*

VANCOUVER

Lead guide Charles Greenberg has a PhD in urban geography so you’re sure to exercise mind and body on any of three guided runs (4.3 to 8.5 miles). From £22.90. *cityrunningtours.com*

DALLAS

Uncover the city’s history, architecture, art and thriving food scene on the go. First four miles $35 (£27), with each additional mile costing $5 (£3.80). *dallasrunningtours.com*

FOR THE VIEWS

Highlands, Scotland

Join a guided run along Perthshire’s many trails, amid woods and waterfalls, finishing with a pub lunch in the village of Dunkeld. From £45 a day, including map and audio guide. *haggisadventures.com*

FOR THE BURN

Dolomites, Italy

Take it up a notch at Hotel Sassongher with their Sky Running experience: jogs along steep, high-altitude trails amid the Italian Alps. From €280 (£241) per day with a guide for up to four people. *sassongher.it*

FOR THE HISTORY

Siem Reap, Cambodia

Boutique retreat Anatara Angkor offers a dawn run through the jungle temple complex of Angkor Wat. From $100 (£76) per person. A fitness coach and temple guide are offered, too. Suites from £149 a night. *angkor.anantara.com*

IMAGES: GETTY

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AT THE Chef's TABLE

Mauritian cuisine is all about fruit and spices. Selina Periampillai shares her pick of what to eat and where

With a unique blend of French, African and Indian influences, the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius has a culinary scene that reflects its rich and varied past. At the many roadside food stalls, Mauritians gather to graze on delicious *gajaks* (snacks or pre-drink nibbles) of chilli-salted tropical fruit or tempura-style fried vegetables dipped in fiery chutney. For visitors, family-run restaurants and *tables d'hôte* (guesthouses) are becoming increasingly popular, offering an opportunity to dine 'island-style' on traditional homemade dishes.

SELINA PERIAMPILLAI is a London-based chef and author of *The Island Kitchen*, a cookbook that takes you on a journey of the Indian Ocean islands (Bloomsbury, RRP: £26)

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Markets
Join the crowds at Flacq Market or the Port Louis bazaar. Sip on fresh coconut water while browsing for spicy biryani and *gateaux piments* (fried chilli cakes).

Guesthouses
Indulge in a traditional Mauritian curry and a shot of *rhum arrangé* (fruity rum) at Kot Marie-Michèlle or Escale Créole guesthouses. *facebook.com/kotmariemichelle escalecreole.net*

Takamaka Boutique Winery
The island is famed for its sugarcane rum, but Takamaka Boutique Winery in Plaines Wilhems District is the first to produce lychee wine. Visit for a tour and wine tasting. *takamakawinery.com*

MUST-TRY

DHAL PURI: I love these thin flatbreads stuffed with ground split peas, usually served with butterbean curry and tomato *satini* (chutney).

The ingredients

PINEAPPLE
Juicy, super-sweet chunks, marinated in chilli, salt and tamarind, are a popular beachside snack.

VANILLA
These pods have a glossy sheen and are packed full of fragrant seeds. Bourbon vanilla is my favourite.

ROASTED CURRY POWDER
Cinnamon, fenugreek and cumin are among the fragrant ingredients used to make Mauritian curry powder.

IMAGES: GETTY

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BEACHES & BITES

Sydney

Wind your way down the stunning Sydney coastline, fuelling up on classic Aussie bites along the way

Words: Charlotte Wigram-Evans

1 PALM BEACH

This 1.5-mile curve of sand is one of the best beaches in Sydney for novice surfers. Grab a coffee from gourmet cafe The Boathouse then pick up a board from Palm Beach Watersports and head out into the waves. Or book a lesson — they cater for all ages and abilities.

2 CURL CURL

Drive on to Curl Curl, where even at weekends you're likely to have much of the beach to yourself. Swim a few laps of the rock pool before tucking into the ultra-healthy fare at Cooh Cafe. Be warned, the courgette fritters sell out fast.

3 MANLY BEACH

Next up: Manly, which is a firm favourite with the locals. If the sun gets too much, check out the Cabbage Tree Bay Eco-Sculpture Walk or head to Bare Naked Bowls for a classic Aussie brunch.

4 ROSE BAY

Hidden between Point Piper and Rose Bay marinas, this beach has the added bonus of being dog friendly. Hire a kayak at Point Piper Kayak Centre or stroll to the Bagel Co — three generations of bakers have refined the art of creating the bagels in town.

5 BONDI BEACH

Head on to Australia's most famous beach, where sand, sea and world-renowned surf are just a stone's throw from the city. If you're here around lunchtime, hit the farmers' market for delicious sandwiches and juices before tucking into your provisions with the sand between your toes.

6 BRONTE BEACH

Bondi's baby sister, Bronte, has all the coastal charm of its elder sibling, with a perfect crescent shape, grassy dunes and a rock pool for swimming. Thirsty? Try the Golden State juice, with strawberry, mango, passion fruit and bee pollen at Cali Press, another Sydney institution.

7 COOGEE BEACH

Finally, end the day at Coogee, a beautiful sandy stretch backed by a promenade of historic buildings and manicured parklands. After one last dip, sit down to a rooftop dinner at the airy Coogee Pavilion, with views stretching out across the Pacific.

ILLUSTRATION: MARTIN HAAKE

Where to stay

CUSCO

Heading to the lofty Peruvian city? Rest your weary head in one of its classic Andean-inspired digs

1 EL RETABLO

This two-storey boutique B&B features eye-catching murals, flowery headboards and the odd painted ceiling. Vibrant splashes of colour are set against bright white walls, and each of the 17 rooms has been hand-painted by a different artist; the style mimics that of a traditional Peruvian *retablo* — a brightly coloured Andean folk art box, often housing tiny religious figurines. Handwoven Andean throws and cushions decorate the beds, and both the high-ceilinged breakfast lounge and pretty courtyard feature vivid murals. For a sense of place, you can't do better than this. From £58. *elretablo.com*

2 TAMBO DEL ARRIERO

This 17th-century colonial mansion started out as an inn for Andean muleteers. It fell into disrepair over the years, before being restored by a local family in 2007. The rooms are set around two balcony-fringed courtyards and while the style is modern with plenty of bright colours, the beamed ceilings and murals are a nod to the building's origins. From £65. *tambodelarriero.com*

3 XO ART HOUSE

A new sibling for El Retablo, this art-themed hotel opened in January 2019 after previously operating under a different name. Set within a grand, converted *casona* (mansion) in the San Blas area, XO Art House's seven boutique-style rooms have been dressed up with a dash of 21st century — think modern art, delicately clashing colours and an array of iPads. From £69. *xoarthousecusco.com*

4 ATIQ BOUTIQUE HOTEL

Overlooking the Coricancha Temple and the church of Santo Domingo, Atiq's nine rooms are a sumptuous retreat right in the heart of the Inca capital. The interior design was overseen by Peruvian designer Elena Testino (sister of famous photographer Mario), and heavy drapes, gilded mirrors and bold, fuschia-and-orange furniture are the order of the day. From £76. *atiqhotel.com*

JULIA BUCKLEY

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Try frtalja — a spring omelette made with delicious seasonal ingredients — at one of the homesteads, or learn to cook like a local at a culinary workshop

Take a walk along the Alpe Adria Trail through vineyards and cherry orchards

Discover the region on e-bike and cycle past castles and Šmartno medieval village

Have a meeting at the renaissance Villa Vipolže congress centre, situated in the middle of the rolling hills of Brda

Tourist information centre Brda, E: tic@brda.si, W: www.brda.si/eng

Festival fun

HAVE A FIELD DAY

Comedy, medieval axe-throwing and Peppa Pig all feature in our roundup of this summer's top family-friendly festivals

25-28 JULY

Port Eliot Festival, Cornwall

You'll have a hard time choosing between all the workshops, storybook readings, talks, treasure hunts, archery, aerial silks, kayaking and a whole lot more at this colourful celebration chock-full of family fun. *porteliotfestival.com*

26-28 JULY

Deer Shed Festival, North Yorkshire

Expect everything from wellness programmes to art workshops, plus plenty of live music, at this eclectic event in Baldersby Park. This year promises its biggest comedy line-up yet, with Reginald D. Hunter and Nina Conti among the stars due to perform. *deershedfestival.com*

26-28 JULY

Chilled in a Field, East Sussex

Aimed at 'grown-up party people and their kids', this independent festival held at Bentley Estate brings together bands, artists, science, theatre and plenty of dance music. Run entirely by volunteers, it's a real labour of love. *chilledinafieldfestival.co.uk*

16-18 AUGUST

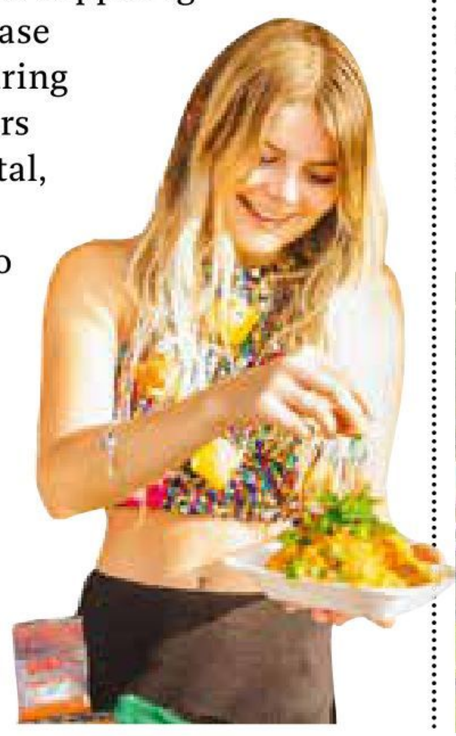
Just So Festival, Cheshire

Pitch a tent in the grounds of Rode Hall for a weekend-long celebration of art, literature and music. Catch a play by moonlight in the Spellbound Forest, relax in the tranquil Peekaboo Garden or get your groove on in the Flamingo Lounge. *justsofestival.org.uk*

23-25 AUGUST

The Big Feastival, Cotswolds

This is family-friendly at its very best, with the likes of Peppa Pig and Paw Patrol's Chase and Marshall appearing alongside music stars including Rudimental, Elbow and Jess Glynne. There'll also be plenty of food demos, pop-up restaurants and a supper club to keep you satisfied. *thebigfeastival.com*



24-26 AUGUST

England's Medieval Festival, East Sussex

Step back in time at Herstmonceux Castle: watch knights jousting, try your hand at axe-throwing and join a torch-lit procession. Why not make a night of it with a spot of medieval glamping? *englandsmedievalfestival.com*

THREE FREE FESTIVALS

6-7 JULY

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON RIVER FESTIVAL

Shakespeare's hometown will be awash with river flotillas and a crop of artisan markets at this free event. Expect live music and dance performances, plus local ales and Pimm's for the grown-ups. *stratforward.co.uk*

19-21 JULY

BRISTOL HARBOUR FESTIVAL

More than 250,000 people will flock to the city's buzzing waterfront for a weekend of comedy acts, live music, circus performers and arts and crafts. *bristolharbourfestival.co.uk*

26-28 JULY

SCARBOROUGH SEAFEST MARITIME FESTIVAL

This free festival celebrates Yorkshire's maritime heritage with street food stalls, live cookery demos and a choice of more than 40 local real ales, beers and ciders. *discoveryorkshirecoast.com*

WORDS: MARIA PIERI. IMAGES: DSF; ED BROWN; GETTY. TENEIGHT; LOUISE ROBERTS

White sandy beaches lapped by topaz waters, lush hills and majestic granite boulders - these dreams of a tropical paradise become reality in the Seychelles. Silhouette is one of the 115 islands of the archipelageo and only a thirty minutes boat ride away from the main island. With its wild nature and unspoiled rainforest Silhouette is a unique treasure and a Mekka for nature lovers and travelers seeking piece and quiet. It is the third biggest island of the Seychelles and yet only 7 % of it has been developed - the coastline where the Hilton Labriz Resort & Spa is located. The award winning hotel regularly appears on top of international ranking lists as one of the best eco-friendly hotels in the Indian Ocean.

Hilton

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Like a local

BELFAST

The Northern Irish capital has blossomed into a true cultural hotspot, replete with bold street art, galleries and a string of hip boutiques

Art and soul

Belfast is best explored on foot, so strike out and get your bearings in the **CATHEDRAL QUARTER**, a rejuvenated trade and warehousing district that today claims the best bars, restaurants and galleries in the city. Among its highlights are **BELFAST EXPOSED**, a pull-no-punches photography gallery with its roots in the divided city of the 1980s, and the **MAC** (Metropolitan Arts Centre), the big fish of the city's cultural scene, which has run a varied programme of visual art, theatre and dance since it opened in 2012. The permanent work in the MAC's foyer is worth a nose, too; Irish artist Mark Garry's piece sees 400 metal wires weave a spectrum of colour through the space. *belfastexposed.org themaclive.com*

If urban art's your thing, a two-hour tour led by local artists shares the inside track on the city's **STREET ART SCENE**. There's an ever-changing itinerary, but pieces like Smug's riveting portrait of a chef on High Street Court, and MTO's 'Son of Protagoras', which portrays a crouching figure bearing a dove pierced by a pair of arrows, already feel iconic. *seedheadarts.com*

Night owl? The first Thursday of every month sees up to 20 galleries welcoming visitors for celebrations of visual art. From 18.00 to 21.00, you can visit galleries like **PLATFORM** or **ARTISANN GALLERY**, have a drink and meet some of the artists. Pick your own route or join an organised bus tour; coaches leave from Linen Hall Library. *belfastarttours.co.uk platformartsbelfast.com artisann.org*

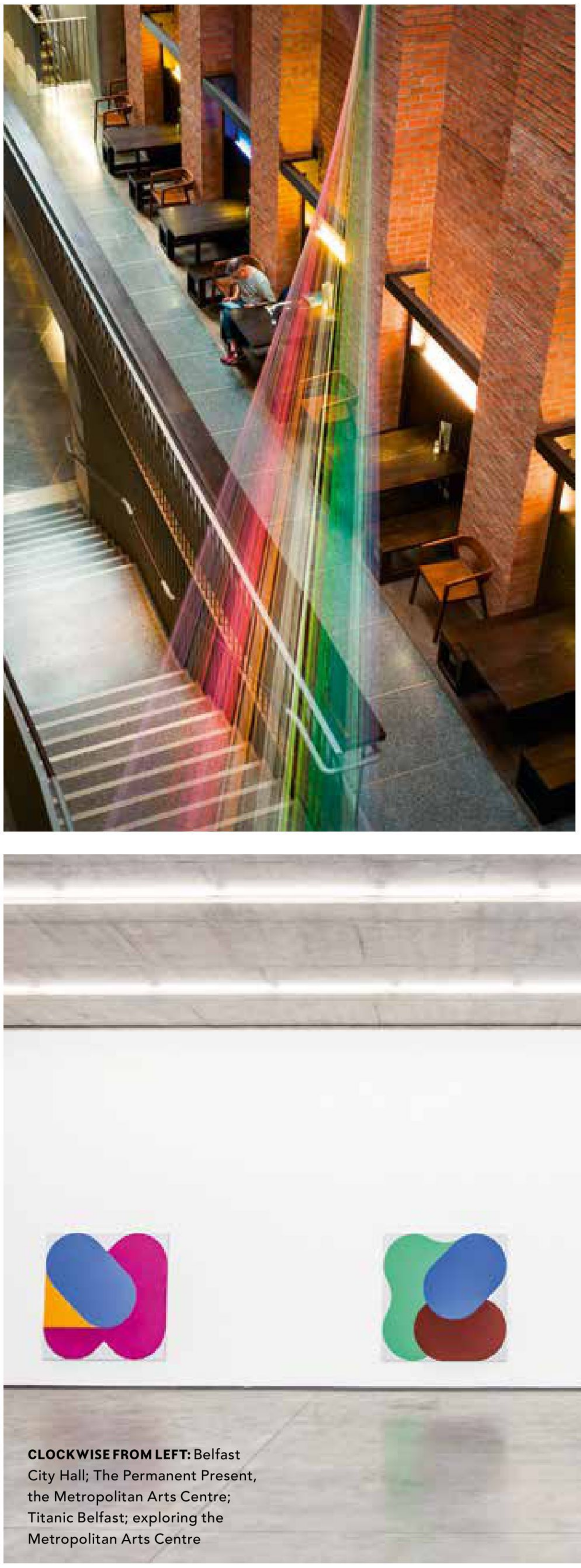
Shop 'til you drop

VICTORIA SQUARE is the city's best mall, but Belfast is a city that rewards hunter-gatherers. For a ladies' fashion fix, call in at **ENVOY OF BELFAST** on Wellington Street, a boutique offering labels like Simone Rocha and Paul Harnden. Men should make a beeline for **THE BUREAU** and its stylish independent labels. *envoyofbelfast.com thebureaubelfast.com*

'If you can't get it in **SAWERS**, you can't get it anywhere', the local saying goes. Swing by Northern Ireland's oldest deli to stock up on regional nibbles like Abernethy butter or Ewing's smoked salmon. Cheese fiends shouldn't miss **MIKES FANCY CHEESE** — its honking Young Buck is one of the best blue cheeses on the island. *sawersbelfast.com mfcheese.com*

Beyond the centre, the Lisburn Road is dubbed Belfast's 'style mile' — but do your research to prevent the waste of a taxi fare. **DEJA VU**, with its designer cast-offs, is a reliable bet.

Finally, if you need a one-stop shop for local crafts, applied art and design, hit up **SPACE CRAFT**. The College Street hub sells everything from lampwork glass earrings to hand-painted silk scarves and tableware. *dejavubelfast.co.uk facebook.com/spacecraftNI* **PÓL Ó CONGHAILE**



TOP TIP

Sunday trading rules mean many bigger shops don't open until 1pm, so Belfast can feel like a ghost town in the mornings. Use the time to see big-hitters like Titanic Belfast (book ahead) or the Ulster Museum

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Belfast City Hall; The Permanent Present, the Metropolitan Arts Centre; Titanic Belfast; exploring the Metropolitan Arts Centre

IMAGES: GETTY; MAC; ALAMY

ADAM TURKINGTON'S TOP 5 *art stops*

THE BLACK BOX

I think this is the most important arts organisation in the city. It's been a petri dish for outsider art, as well as small and interesting events and festivals in Belfast for the past 12 years. *blackboxbelfast.com*

DUEL OF BELFAST, DANCE BY CANDLELIGHT

This mural by Conor Harrington is one of the oldest pieces on our street art tour. It echoes our history and the idea of fighting over things that don't matter while everything is collapsing around us.

GOLDEN THREAD GALLERY

This is a really well curated contemporary arts space on Great Patrick Street. You'll find small experimental stuff — and, well, really big, ambitious, experimental stuff. It's always on my list. *goldenthreadgallery.co.uk*

CS LEWIS SQUARE

Celebrating the local author with Narnia-inspired statues, this square has transformed this part of the city along with the EastSide Visitor Centre. It's a short walk from Boundary Brewing, which I'd consider Ireland's best brewery. *boundarybrewing.coop*

SUNFLOWER PUBLIC HOUSE

There's music every night at this spot on the corner of Kent Street and Union Street. There's plenty of street art on display in the bar, as well as on the surrounding streets. *sunflowerbelfast.com*

Adam Turkington is the owner/manager of Seedhead Arts, a Belfast-based arts consultancy. *seedheadarts.com*

KAMP KOREN
KOBARID SLOVENIJA

CAMPING KOREN

The first Slovenian eco camping connects Triglav National Park and Soča, one of Europe's most beautiful rivers. The Soča valley offers numerous possibilities for sport activities in the mountains, in the sky or in the water. Only 500 meters from the centre of Kobarid, a town of history and a place of excellent cuisine. You can stay in the camp-site with your own equipment, or choose between eco chalets and glamping huts. The camping also has sauna, salt room, hall, gym and sport equipment to rent.

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STAY AT HOME

Tunbridge Wells

Soak up the sights of this charming Georgian spa town set in the Kent countryside

Why go

Thanks to its mineral-rich thermal springs, Royal Tunbridge Wells was the place to be for 18th- and 19th-century nobility, who'd decamp here to take to the waters and make merry. The days of debauchery might be over, but the genteel Kent town has plenty to keep visitors occupied for a weekend away, with bustling boutiques, cafes and bars all set against a backdrop of some of country's finest Regency architecture. *visitkent.co.uk visittunbridgewells.com*

What to do

Many of Kent's castles — it has more than any other English county — are within easy reach. Twenty minutes' drive from the town centre is Scotney Castle, a Tudor revival manor and 14th-century moated castle surrounded by elaborate gardens. Nearby Penshurst Place is a grand stately home dating back to the 1300s. *nationaltrust.org.uk penshurstplace.com*

WE LIKE
Chapel Place for its giddying collection of more than 120 gins, stacked like apothecary bottles behind the bar. *chapelplacetw.co.uk*

DON'T MISS: THE PANTILES

A stroll along this colonnade, where high-flying flâneurs would come to gamble, dance and drink away the summer, is a must. Today, it's a fine spot for afternoon tea and a browse of the farmers' market.

WHERE TO EAT

The Black Pig

This pub lives up to its name, with the likes of pork croquettes and slow-roasted pork on the menu. There are plenty of non-porcine plates, too, from steak to sea bream. *theblackpig.net*

WHERE TO STAY

One Warwick Park

Each of the 39 rooms and suites offers a stylish escape from the bustle of the nearby High Street. The hotel's restaurant, Seventeen, serves up elegant British fare. *onewarwickpark.co.uk*

WORDS: CONNOR MCGOVERN. IMAGES: @BLACKPIGTW; ALAMY; GETTY

THE EPIC NO.1 BESTSELLER FROM

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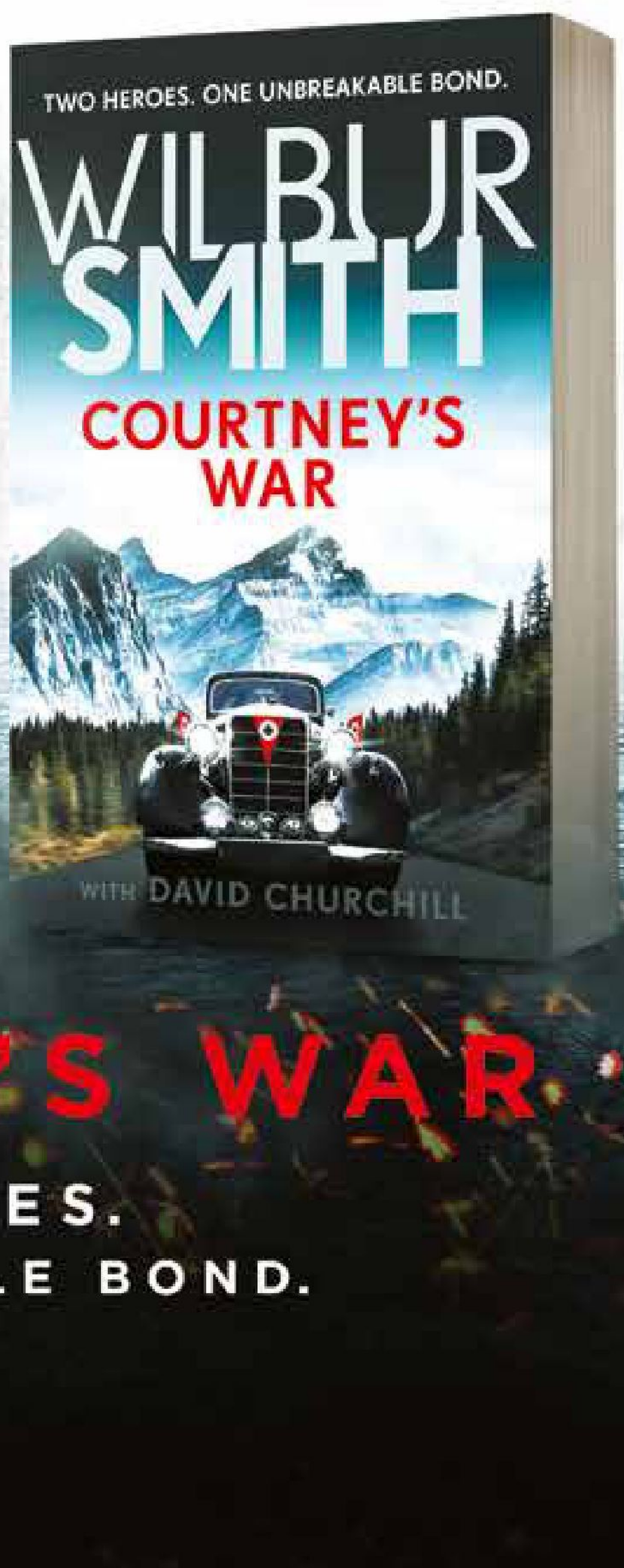

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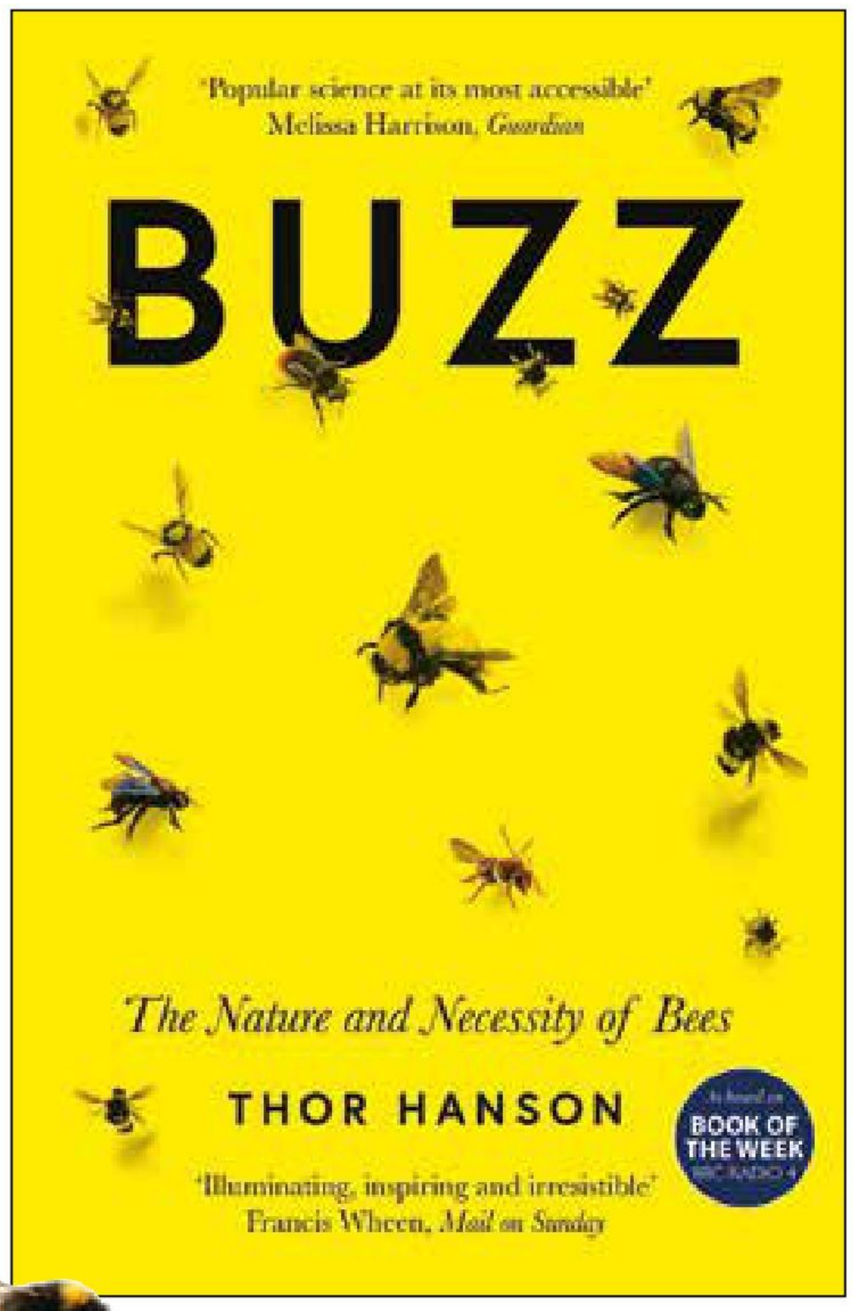
STING IN THE TALE

Thor Hanson looks at the vital role bees play in our existence, and travels across the world to meet the people working to protect them



The humble bee needs our help — an alarming 40% of all bee species are in decline or threatened with extinction.

Delving into the natural world is familiar territory for conservation biologist and author Thor Hanson, who's previously penned tomes about gorillas, feathers and seeds, but *Buzz* marks his first foray into insects. Focusing on wild bees, he details their evolution, interaction with plants and humans and, most critically, the challenges facing them now.

On his round-the-world journey, Hanson meets scientists, farmers and bee-lovers; there's a visit to a Californian date plantation to illustrate how painstaking hand pollination can be, and a visit to an almond orchard, where efforts are being made to revive the bee population. It's an insightful read that cleverly melds nature, history and apiology. Hanson dubs his pollinating protagonists 'hippie, long-haired, flower-loving, vegetarian wasps' — with descriptions like that, he might win over even the most hardened apiphobes.

Buzz, by Thor Hanson, now in paperback, is published by Icon Books. RRP: £9.99.

CONNOR MCGOVERN & SARAH BARRELL

HOW CAN YOU HELP BEES AT HOME?

FLOWER POWER
Plant more bee-friendly flora with different blooming cycles, such as lavender, catmint, borage and coneflower

HOME SWEET HOME
Place wood with drilled holes in window boxes or leave patches of bare earth — perfect for nests

KEEP IT CLEAN
Bees don't like toxic chemicals. Reduce — or even better, eliminate — your use of pesticides

WISE WORDS: A NATURAL SELECTION

HOW TO CATCH A MOLE
It's not often you meet a mole-catcher, let alone read their story. Marc Hamer's uplifting writings shed some light on the velvety creatures burrowing beneath our countryside.
RRP: £12.99 (Harvill Secker)

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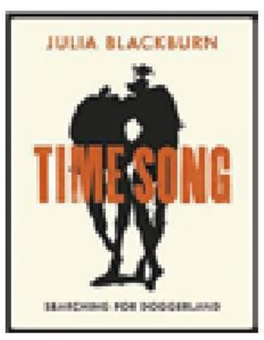
Environmentalist Jeremy Purseglove shares the many ways in which we can carefully harvest the earth's fruits, whether it's cocoa farming in Trinidad or apple-picking in Kent.
RRP: £14.99 (Profile Books)



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WHEN: 6 October 2019, 10.00-18.00
WHERE: University of Westminster, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LS
TICKETS: £50 or two for £90
TO BOOK: *nationalgeographic.co.uk/events*

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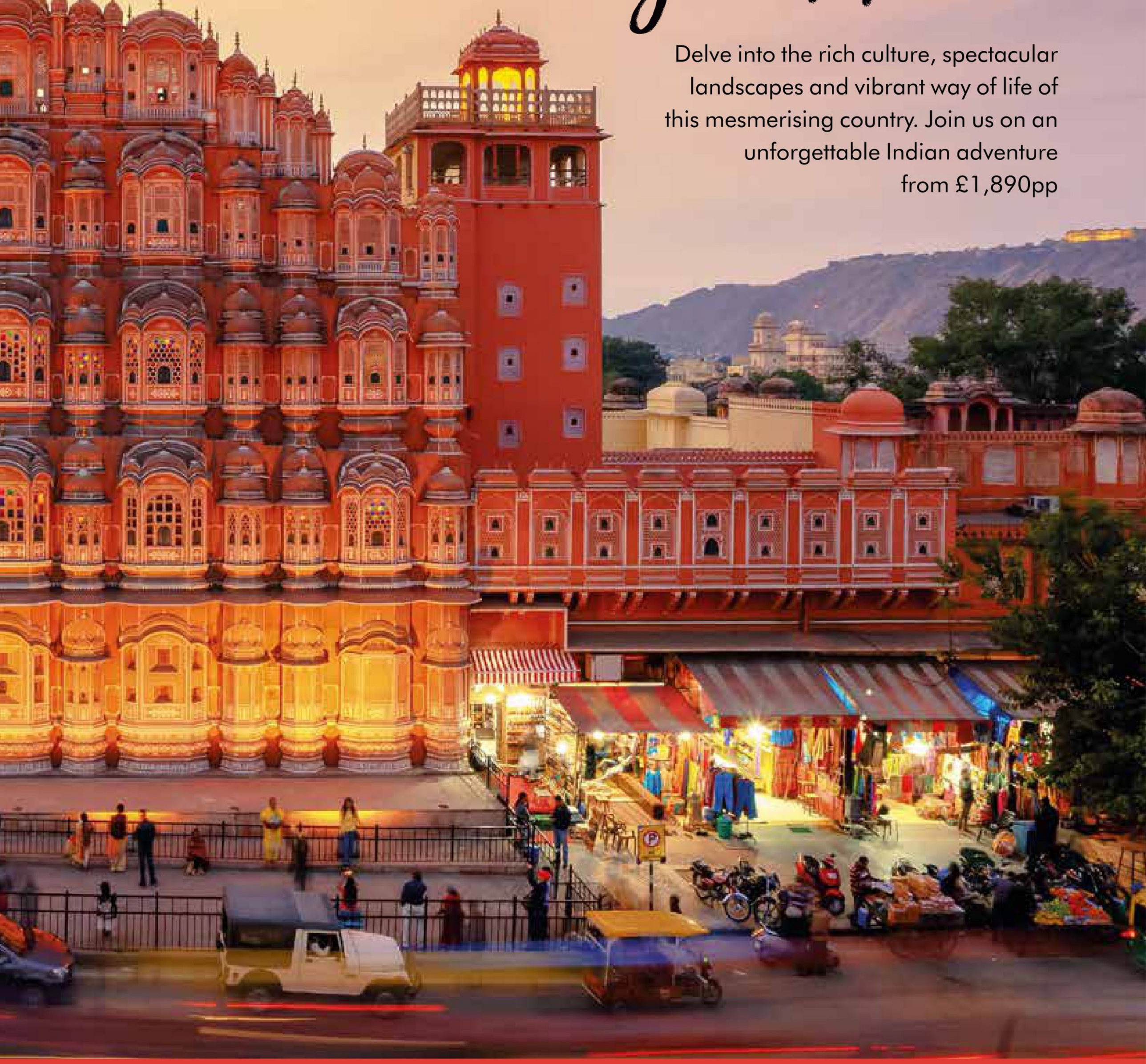

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NOTES FROM AN AUTHOR // CHRIS PAVONE

PARIS

Against a backdrop of elegant boulevards and prestigious museums, in a time of crisis the French capital reveals its vital heart and soul

Most summers, my family take a week-long holiday to a fishing camp on an island in a river in Ontario; this is a trip I decline to join, for various reasons, and a few years ago, I used that solo week to go to Paris. It's a city I'd visited maybe 10 times. Paris was not new to me.

But new to Paris in 2016 was terrorism: the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre had occurred at the beginning of 2015, with widespread attacks to follow in November, then just days before I arrived a truck ploughed into a crowd of Bastille celebrants in Nice. More than 200 people were murdered, 600-plus injured.

This Paris was a very different city from the one I'd been visiting for two decades. This Paris was aggressively policed, with clusters of soldiers wearing helmets and flak jackets, carrying assault weapons, patrolling even quiet residential streets. Police cars and vans and motorcycles were constantly tearing around; tourist sites had the appearance of military installations. Metro stations and museums and bridges: uniforms and armour and guns were everywhere.

This Paris didn't look like Western Europe in the post-national era of the EU. This looked more like Central America in the late 1970s, a place where you wouldn't — or shouldn't — be surprised to find yourself tear-gassed (as my family did in Guatemala City), or detained by itchy-fingered military police on an isolated mountain road (yup). This Paris also felt like my hometown of New York in the months following 9/11: a city on edge, tensed for the next attack.

Yet despite the fog of fear, this was still Paris. People in the cafes barely looked up from their kirs and Gauloises when the police zoomed by. I felt a new kinship with these Parisians, people who were living in the same situation that had been so familiar to me 15 years earlier: the jittery aftermath of large-scale terrorism. Paris suddenly became much more real to me, not just beautiful streets and amazing restaurants and world-class culture, but a home for people who bought groceries and cooked dinner, where they struggled with faltering careers and midlife crises, got married and had kids. Where people lived and died, sometimes in terror attacks.

ILLUSTRATION: JACQUI OAKLEY

This Paris was a place I wanted to write a novel about, this intersection of ordinary life and extraordinary circumstance in a spectacular setting. I set to work immediately, writing each day for a couple of hours at a cosy indoor breakfast cafe, then I'd take a short break to move to an outdoors, hang-out cafe for another couple of hours, spending my whole mornings with a laptop in this perfect, quiet corner of the seventh arrondissement.

Then I'd set off with the intention of doing touristy stuff in the afternoon. But I kept finding myself drawn back to this story, stopping on sidewalks, scribbling notes on scraps of paper. I couldn't help imagining myself as one or another fictional characters, this one shopping for food at the farmer's market I was browsing, that one checking emails from the Hausmannian balcony above me, another carrying a suitcase bomb into the Louvre's courtyard right here.

Not only were my real-life family thousands of miles away, but their remote island didn't have phone or internet service, nor electricity. It was impossible to communicate with my touchstones to reality. Each day I felt increasingly seceded from my life, while more deeply inhabiting these make-believe personas.

I bought some fruit at the outdoor market on the Boulevard Raspail; wandered through a St-Germain-des-Prés supermarket. I spent early evening hours writing in the gardens of Palais-Royal, surrounded by families having picnics and playing petanque. I met a friend at a famous cafe on a famous boulevard.

Each of these experiences wove itself into the fabric of the book, all these imaginary characters and me sharing the same terror-stricken Paris. After dinner, I'd return to the hotel and get back to work, trying to wring every last bit of contemporaneous verisimilitude out of the day.

I wasn't much of a tourist that week. I'd done the museums before, but what I'd never done before was go on vacation and have the most productive work week of my life.

I stopped on sidewalks, scribbling notes on scraps of paper. I couldn't help imagining myself as one or another fictional characters, this one shopping for food at the farmer's market, that one checking emails from the Hausmannian balcony above

The Paris Diversion, by Chris Pavone, is published by Faber & Faber. RRP: £14.99.

chrispavone.com

VIEW FROM THE USA // AARON MILLAR

HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD?

It sells the American Dream to a starstruck world, but behind the scenes Hollywood is as phoney as its plastic shark. Should we care?

Hollywood is a microcosm of everything I love and hate about America. On the one hand, there's fake, vacuous people and an obsession with blowing things up. On the other, popcorn.

Hollywood is America's story. It's the narrative the US tells the world about itself, on repeat, all the time — America the great, the beautiful, the powerful, the just, the dazzlingly glamorous and the unreal. If the world was a cocktail party, Hollywood would be the annoyingly successful cokehead bragging about himself at the top of his lungs.

That's a problem. The journalist and author Angela Carter called Hollywood 'the place where the United States perpetuated itself as a universal dream and put the dream into mass production'. It's the marketing engine of the country; it's selling the US brand around the world — and we're buying. We're all becoming Americans, each and every one of us, sneakily, steadily, so slowly we don't even see it happening. But is the dream real?

Let me first say that I love Los Angeles. Venice Beach, with all its arty eccentricity, tattoos and ripped abs. Malibu, where bronzed megastars parade amid silver surf and golden sand. Take away the traffic and smog and LA is the ultimate urban utopia, ocean on one side, mountains on the other, with convertibles, mansions and beautiful people in between. It's like a piece of modern art; it would be ridiculous if it weren't framed so beautifully. Hollywood could exist nowhere else on earth.

I strolled the Hollywood Walk of Fame, saw the sign, hit the shops on Sunset Boulevard and followed in the footsteps of rock 'n' roll royalty at Chateau Marmont. This 1920s gothic hotel, rising above Sunset Strip like some twisted inverse of Disney's Cinderella Castle, is the place where Led Zeppelin's John Bonham once rode his Harley-Davidson through the lobby. Say no more.

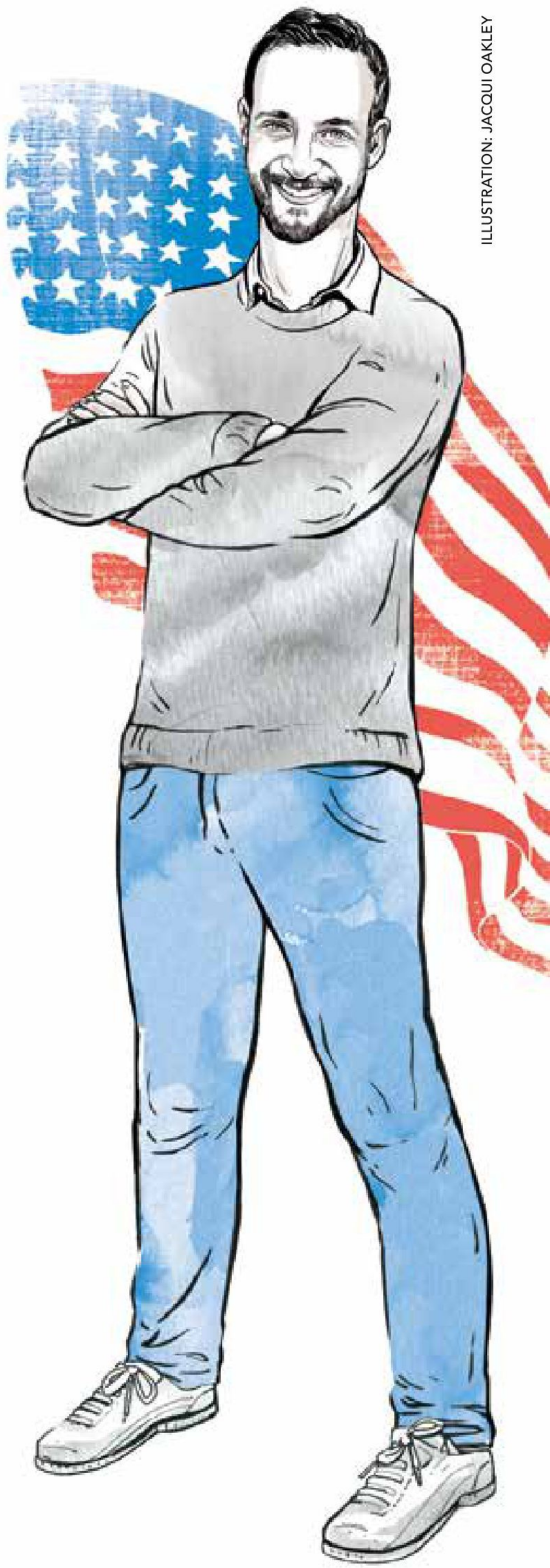
Then came the highlight. I walked into Universal Studios Hollywood a theme park cynic and came out feeling like a kid who'd been let loose in a sweet shop. The last time I'd been on a roller coaster, they were made out of wood and scaffolding; these ones were like the Star Trek holodeck I prayed would be invented in my youth. I played quidditch with Harry Potter, fought off velociraptors with King Kong, made friends with a Transformer and got into a high-speed shootout with the Fast and the Furious crew. Who needs Mickey Mouse ears and acapella singing when you can have Vin Diesel on a motorbike?

Yet there's an irony to all this: the Hollywood Walk of Fame is also the Boulevard of Broken Dreams, where wannabe actors in Marvel costumes sell tours to mansions they'll never own; Captain America's heavier stepbrother touts alongside Spider-Man's scrawny cousin (the only web he's familiar with is online); and the theme park's Studio Tour is a glimpse behind the scenes, but also a ride through a ghost town of 2D neighbourhoods and back lots, passing one of the worst fake sharks I've ever seen along the way. How that set of plastic jaws kept me out of the ocean for my entire childhood I'll never know.

If Hollywood is a mass production line for the American Dream, then doesn't it have a responsibility to tell the whole truth? After all, we're buying what it's selling: the brave and beautiful, the funny and smart, the forever faultless and blemish-free. And if it's an unattainable ideal, then we'll just never get there.

But we forgive it. As Mark Twain once said: 'Never let the truth get in the way of a good story'. He's half right. No one wants to be teleported to the Boulevard of Broken Dreams, but the myths we let ourselves believe matter, too. Hollywood may be cheesy and vacuous and filled with too many guns, but if you don't take it too seriously it's also a lot of fun. Hollywood is the legend factory of our time, shaping the way we see the world and ourselves in it. It can be that brash guy at the party or the quiet one in the corner with something truly interesting to say. Either way, I'm ordering popcorn. *discoverlosangeles.com universalstudioshollywood.com*

British travel writer Aaron Millar ran away from London in 2013 and has been hiding out in the Rocky Mountains of Boulder, Colorado ever since.
@AaronMWriter



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WHAT'S ONLINE

MALAWI'S FESTIVAL FEVER

In our May issue, we looked at the Warm Heart of Africa. Inspired? Check out our guide to the best art and music festivals across the country on the website now

When Scottish explorer and missionary David Livingstone reached Africa's third-largest lake in 1859, he was greeted by the stunning pre-dawn spectacle of fishermen canoeing by lamplight. It inspired him to coin its nickname, the Lake of Stars. Years later, in 2004, Livingstone's epithet and Lake Malawi's dazzling beaches were employed by a British promoter to launch a music festival that quickly developed mythical status worldwide.

The success of Lake of Stars sparked festival fever in Malawi and, before the end of the decade, the diminutive nation had packed the reliably clement period between late September and early November with events, creating new spaces to showcase the country's dynamism and rising stars to the rest of the world. These five festivals stand out for their curated line-ups, striking environments, cheap tickets and friendly crowds — and offer a vibrant complement to a trip spent touring colonial tea estates in the highlands, spotting big cats in newly rewilded national parks or idling away days by the lake.

READ OUR TOP FIVE ONLINE
NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/TRAVEL

MOST READ

From the age-old traditions of almsgiving in Laos to the global reach of veganism, here's what you've been reading online

Q&A
Meet the adventurer: Alice Morrison
The BBC Two presenter shares her idea of adventure

BLOG
Almsgiving in Laos
The roads of Luang Prabang succumb to a sunrise almsgiving ceremony each day

FOOD
The global reach of veganism
Our guide to the worldwide quest for plant-based perfection

WHY IT MATTERS: WILDLIFE TOURISM

As National Geographic concentrates on wildlife tourism in its global campaigns this month, Natasha Daly looks at how you can discover the animal kingdom responsibly

It's complicated. People love animals and naturally want to get close to them and genuinely want to learn more about them too. It's a desire that's increasingly fuelled by social media, where travellers share their experiences instantaneously.

The reality that many tourists don't see is that to stay in business, elephant interactions — and photo ops with tigers and swimming with manta rays — rely on a steady stream of working wild animals, all of which have been caught, bred or trained into submission.

And it's all too easy to misread the signs of suffering. Captive elephants sway their trunks back and forth — almost as if they're dancing. In reality, it's a sign of psychological distress. Sloths seem to love cuddling, but their hug is really just an attempt to cling to what feels to them like a tree trunk. Dolphins appear to be smiling, but that's the natural set of their mouths.

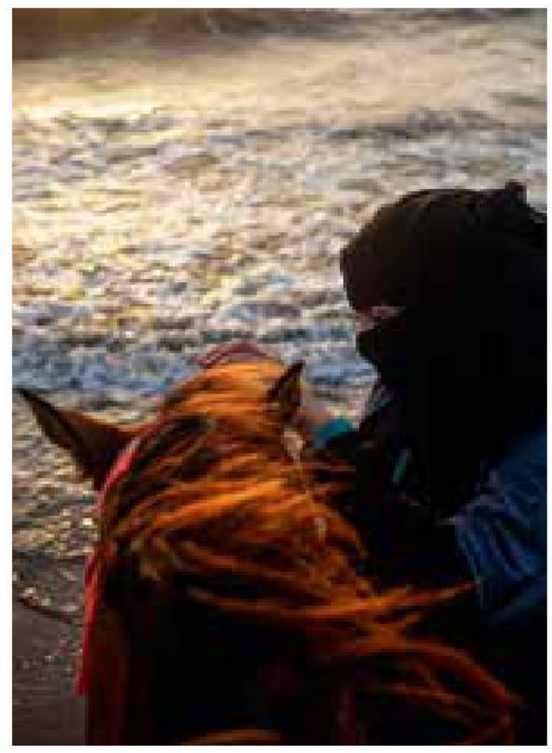
Travellers are increasingly recognising that many animal tourist attractions may not be ethical. More and more backpackers are shunning elephant riding. The industry knows it.

Individual actions don't happen in a vacuum. When travellers decide they want something different, the wildlife tourism market will change.

READ THE FULL COLUMN ONLINE NOW

IMAGES: GETTY; AMIRA AL-SHARIF; EVAN SUNG; MATT PARKER; KRISTIN PERERS

BEYOND THE TRAVEL SECTION



I PHOTOGRAPHY I

In Yemen, a photographer finds points of light in the darkness
Amira Al-Sharif trains her lens on the hope that stubbornly persists in her homeland amid shadows of conflict (pictured above)

I SPACE I

Why the Moon's south pole may be space's hottest destination
Jeff Bezos and his spaceflight firm Blue Origin have announced their lunar ambitions — joining the race for this extraterrestrial real estate

I ENVIRONMENT I

What sunscreens are best for you — and the planet?
Harmful chemicals from sunscreen can damage coral. Here's how to protect both your skin and the reefs

PHOTO STORY
In pictures: Kebabs in Lucknow
In the northern Indian city, this meat dish takes centre stage

BOOKS
Diving into a Cypriot kitchen
An interview with Georgina Hayden, author of *Taverna*

ITALY
The 12 designs shaping modern Italy
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THE PRIZES

SEVEN-NIGHT HOLIDAY FOR TWO IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The winner and a guest will jet off to this Caribbean paradise, courtesy of Air Europa, and stay at the Grand Bahia Principe Aquamarine in Punta Cana: a lush oasis set amid luxurious beaches, swaying palms and ocean views. On offer is a free diving class in the hotel's swimming pool, and guests can take their pick from an array of dining options: there's an international buffet, restaurants serving Japanese and Peruvian food, plus Italian and fine-dining establishments. *bahia-principe.com aireuropa.com*

A TWO-NIGHT STAY FOR TWO IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

On the shores of Ullswater, Another Place, The Lake is perfect for couples who value getting active as much as relaxing. The winner and a guest will win two nights on a B&B basis with dinner on both nights, lake sports lessons and a spa treatment at the Swim Club. Guests can swim the lake-view pool or follow in the footsteps of Alfred Wainwright and explore the region's dramatic fells. *another.place*

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Weekender

FINISTÈRE

Brittany's extreme west is a land of plenty, offering grand lighthouse landmarks and beachside restaurants celebrating some of France's finest seafood. **WORDS:** *Carolyn Boyd*

Where France hooks its Breton arm into the wild Atlantic, you'll find Finistère, the French equivalent of Land's End. Located on the northwestern shores of France, the waves here can be ferocious — but this coastline can also be temperate, gentle and exotic thanks to the Gulf Stream, which lends its warmer climate to golden-sand beaches, picturesque harbour towns and botanical gardens.

Off the coast there are the islands to explore. Most can be reached by foot-passenger ferries and are car-free, peaceful havens for cycling. From Roscoff, the Île de Batz is just a 15-minute boat ride away. Hire a bike on the quayside and pedal past granite cottages with gardens brimming with flowers. Off the west coast, the islands of Molène and Ushant (Ouessant in French) are two of around 20 islands and islets in the Ponant archipelago, which forms the westernmost bastion of metropolitan France. Île de Molène is rich in wildlife, with grey seals, otters and seabirds basking on its beaches. On the wild and remote Ushant, meanwhile, there are six lighthouses to protect ships from its rocky coastline.

Not so long ago, you'd have heard only Breton being spoken out here in northern Finistère. A stronger Celtic tradition — all lace bonnets and Breton bagpipes — is found in the south of the department, at Quimper and Pont L'Abbé, but locals here remain fiercely proud of their Breton identity and its seafaring, land-working heritage.

The region's proximity to Grande-Bretagne also has its influence: in Roscoff, people have a close relationship to England, made stronger by generations of onion sellers crossing the channel from Roscoff to peddle the town's delicate pink onions door-to-door throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Anglo-Breton friendship is maintained these days by the hundreds of Brits rolling off the overnight ferry from Plymouth — by far the easiest way to arrive. While many pass through to destinations south, those who linger a while in northern Finistère will be spoilt by region's plentiful cuisine; there's a bounty of fresh vegetables grown in the red-hued soil and a decadent array of seafood and fish landed fresh each day. Just take a seat on the terrace of a harbour-front restaurant and tuck in.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Old town, Roscoff; Roscoff Onion Festival; Île de Batz lighthouse; view from Hotel Brittany; seafood dish, Hotel Brittany's restaurant

IMAGES: LAMOUREUX-ALEXANDRE; ALAMY; PASCAL LÉOPOLD/HOTEL BRITTANY

Food, glorious food

The gentle climate on Finistère's north coast facilitates a bounty of delicious produce: try cauliflowers, globe artichokes and Roscoff's celebrated pink onions, which — thanks to the town's history of 'Onion Johnny' sellers — have their own museum. There's even an annual festival in their honour. The coastline offers a huge variety of seafood, from giant crabs and fat, juicy langoustines, to daily fresh fish and edible seaweed gathered from the rocky beaches.

Where to stay

Try the Hotel Brittany in Roscoff, which has an indoor pool and spa as well as an excellent Michelin-starred restaurant. At Brignogan-Plages, the eco-friendly Hôtel de la Mer opens out on to the beach and offers seaweed-gathering workshops. In Le Conquet, a seaside town on the far west coast, the Sainte-Barbe Hôtel & Spa is due to open later this summer, with spectacular views out to the islands of Molène and Ushant as well as a spa and restaurant.
hotel-brittany.com hoteldelamer.bzh

TROPICAL GARDENS

On the Île de Batz, the Georges Delaselle Garden was established in 1897 by Parisian insurer Delaselle. It brings together hundreds of plants from the southern hemisphere, many of which were brought back by sailors returning from Australasia.

TAKE THREE

lighthouses

ÎLE DE BATZ LIGHTHOUSE

The 144ft granite lighthouse on the enchanting island of Batz makes for the perfect end-destination when cycling around the island. Pedal past rolling farmers' fields and then climb the 198 steps to gaze back towards the Finistère coast.

CRÉAC'H LIGHTHOUSE

There are six lighthouses on or around the island of Ushant. The most striking is the mighty black-and-white striped Phare du Créac'h. The most powerful lighthouse in Europe, its beam shines almost 40 miles across the Atlantic below.

SAINT-MATHIEU

On the wild west coast, south of the harbour town of Le Conquet, the red-topped Phare Saint-Mathieu offers incredible views of the Iroise sea and its many islands. There's a small museum telling its history and, next to it, is the ruined and wonderfully atmospheric 11th-century Abbaye Saint-Mathieu de Fine-Terre.

Île de Batz lighthouse

EYEWITNESS

THE WILDEST WEST

As a habituated ferry passenger, I rarely bother with anti-sickness meds, anti-nausea wristbands, or keeping my eyes on the horizon. But as my family and I prepare to take the ferry to Ushant — or the Île d'Ouessant as the French call it — I'm not taking any chances. What I've read about metropolitan France's westernmost landmass is that it's wild. Cast out in the Atlantic, numerous lighthouses are poised on its peripheries to protect traffic in the busy Ouessant strait shipping lane. It's where thousands of sailors have perished.

As we set sail on the small foot-passenger ferry — which is packed with fellow day-trippers — from the quayside at Le Conquet, I realise I might have over-thought the potential for nausea in August. The sea is as flat as a pancake. We cruise past the many other islands in the Ponant archipelago, including the luscious, green Île de Molène, with hundreds of sea birds gliding above us in the clear blue summer sky.

After an hour, we approach Ushant, its blond, craggy cliffs embracing ships into the harbour. Our boat bobs and jerks against the sea wall as we step up and onto the dock. In winter, I'm told, waves here can reach almost 50ft, making it impossible to disembark. We pick up rental bikes and pedal off up the hill, keen to find out more about this mysterious island, a place that attracts the curious — just like us — who want to discover what France's western frontier is really like.

A tumultuous grey sky threatens overhead as we push on across moorland whose fragrant bracken and gorse is redolent of Dartmoor. It's then an easy freewheel down the hill into the village of Lampaul, as the sun peeps out of the shadows and the mighty Créac'h lighthouse towers in the distance.

The restaurants are busy in the village, but we manage to grab a table on a prime terrace and tuck into moules-frites. But all the while I'm craning my neck to glimpse the coast; I can just about hear the roar of the waves. Soon enough, we pedal out beyond the church and whitewashed houses of the village, towards Pointe de Pern, the westernmost point of the island, and thus Metropolitan France.

The smooth, open road wends between crumbling stonewalls, golden grassy meadows, small windmills and memorials to anonymous sailors who perished in the region's many shipwrecks. Ahead: the Créac'h lighthouse. As we approach, the landscape becomes wilder, with swaying grass and purple heather, a gravel path down to the sea with outcrops of granite that the children stop to climb. The sound of the waves crashing against the tumbling expanse of dark brown rocks is deafening. The lighthouses look on like chess pieces, protecting us pawns. There's nothing to do but sit and be still in the blazing summer sun, watching as the Atlantic proves that this is the wildest west there is.

When Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled to the island of Saint Helena, he stood on deck for several hours and watched as the island of Ushant disappeared into the distance; it was his last sight of France

Hotel Brittany in Roscoff has standard doubles from €125 (£108).
hotel-brittany.com
Brittany Ferries has frequent crossings from Plymouth to Roscoff. Alternatively, fly to Brest or Rennes with Flybe.
brittany-ferries.co.uk flybe.com
To get to Ushant, take the ferry from Le Conquet. Use the park-and-ride to reach the harbour, as parking is limited.
brittanytourism.com

IMAGE: ALAMY

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Eat

VALENCIA

With a unique microclimate and fertile soil, it's no wonder this coastal Spanish city has a growing gastronomic scene built on the back of its paella heritage. Words: Audrey Gillan

Ricard Camarena is sniffing a boletus mushroom, turning the fat, fresh fungus otherwise known as a penny bun or cep in his hand. "This is the texture I need. Not too hard, yet not too soft. We eat it raw, sliced on a mandolin."

One of Spain's best chefs — entirely self-taught, he won a second Michelin star for his Ricard Camarena Restaurant in November 2018 — he's in his element here in Valencia's Central Market, where stallholders grin as he approaches. We pause to ogle some fat Valencia tomatoes, local lobster and langoustine. Then Ricard grabs a handful of *chufas* — tiger nuts — used to make the Valencian milk-like iced drink, *horchata*. "This is a food market," he says. "Not a gastronomy market. This is where people come to buy the best local produce; some come here every single day."

Valencia's increasing popularity as a tourist destination means its gastronomic scene is excelling, Ricard believes. "We're close to the sea, the land is very fertile, the weather is good, and the cooks are very talented." At Paco Solaz, one of the stalls, he asks to taste some cheese. "Valencia is famous for fresh cheeses, not cured ones," he explains. "But my personal favourite is the Espadán de Los Corrales, a goat's cheese." Made with raw milk in the Sierra de Espadán north of the city, it has a strong smell and a tangy taste, and melts in the mouth with a creamy, slightly crumbly texture.

We meander on, calling into Central Bar — another of Ricard's enterprises — located in the middle of the market. In the tiny tiled space we eat sweet little anchovies fried in batter and *la titaina*, a Valencian speciality made from aubergine, red and green pepper, tomato, pine nuts and fresh or salted tuna. Ricard orders plate upon plate. But one of the most popular tapas in his hometown is, for reasons Ricard has no idea, a Russian salad. I tell him I'm happiest in this kind of place, where old men sit drinking beer and people stop to chat. "So am I," he laughs. This is the casual Camarena, in jeans, trainers and sleeveless jacket.

When I see him later, he's in chef whites at Ricard Camarena Restaurant, which is housed in a former hydraulic pump factory. It's a modernist cavern, seating an average of just 35 people. Ricard invites guests to a

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Organic artichokes, smoked eel and Dutch eel at Ricard Camarena Restaurant; Plaza de la Virgen; Central Bar; cod fritters, Central Bar; Café de las Horas interior

IMAGES: RICARD CAMARENA RESTAURANT; RICARD CAMARENA CENTRAL BAR; GETTY; CAFE DE LAS HORAS

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worktable at the centre of the restaurant, entreating them to try various tiny vegetables (the baby cucumber I eat is sweet and intensely flavoured) and to understand a little more about his cooking.

"We have our own farm. Everything is organic and we only use local varieties," he explains. "This allows us to use the shape and size we want. Every day we have fresh produce from the farm. And, of course, lots of our products are from the sea. I really love vegetables — combine size, variety and technique, and you get an elaborate result."

There's an onion that's been roasted in the oven, the charred layers peeled and served with burnt butter and Ricard's own five-year-old anchovy essence he calls Letern: Umami de Mar. "This is my salt," he says. "It's the umami of the sea and has everything the sea contains: salt, iodine, oxide and the salting of fish over time."

Food from the fields

In the heart of the old town, Colmado LaLola is a gorgeous shop and tiny cafe/bar, just by the 14th-century bell tower known as El Miguelete. It's here I meet gregarious owner Jesús Ortega and his dog Rubio (Blondie). He's bursting with pleasure as he talks about Valencia's produce, which thrives in a microclimate shaped by Valencia's position between the mountains and the sea. "These are *ortiga de mar*," he says, holding a bag full of soft sea anemones, beautiful lilac-tinged plants that will be deep fried. He brings grilled *rovellons* (wild mushrooms known as saffron milk caps in English), sweet tomatoes dressed simply in olive oil, and Les Perles de Valencia, locally grown oysters. Jesús's take on patatas bravas — squares of potato, crispy on the outside, fluffy on the inside, with a sauce made from oil, chickpea flour, eggs, garlic and smoked paprika in the centre — is the potato dish of dreams.

A few minutes round the corner is the fabulous Café de Las Horas, where eccentric owner Marc Insanally presents a jug of the local speciality agua de Valencia, which is made from orange juice, cava, vodka and orange liqueur. "We have people complaining this cocktail isn't very strong, because it tastes like a lovely, only slightly alcoholic orange juice," he says. "And then they stand up." Marc — from British Guiana via London — opened the cafe in 1994, modelling it on a *tertulia*, a literary cafe, serving teas, cocktails and tapas in an over-the-top rococo glory of a room.

IMAGE: AUDREY GILLIAN

A TASTE OF

Valencia

RESTAURANT RICARD CAMARENA

Intensely flavoured stocks and sauces form the backbone of many dishes on a menu that varies all year to reflect the ever-changing produce, much of which grown on the restaurant's farm. Part of the experience here involves Camarena showing guests raw ingredients and preparing *amuse bouche* in front of them, and then, at the table, dishes can include: shrimp, pickled peas and strawberries; and marinated sea bass topped with a caviar cream and eggs. Lunch costs around £59 per person and the Ricard Camarena menu, including 'prelude' appetizers and 10 courses, is around £134. *ricardcamarenarestaurant.com/en*

TRENCADISH

Located across two levels of a 17th-century building, this restaurant in the old town specialises in rice and fish dishes. The well-priced set menus are either for sharing or offering a 'tasting' experience. Plates change almost daily according to what's in season, but can include cod fritters, breadsticks with Iberian ham, seafood rice, entrecote or sea bream. A dessert highlight is *torrita de horchata* (a milky, ice-cold Valencian beverage made with tiger nuts) served with honey ice cream. A three-course lunch menu costs around £15.50 per person and a seven-course tasting menu is around £30. *trencadish.com*

COLMADO LALOLA

This atmospheric shop-meets-restaurant has Valencian tiles on the walls and a selection of the city's finest produce lining the shelves and stacked in glass fridges. Iberian ham is carved to order, while hot and cold tapas can include Valencian tomatoes with *mojama* (dried tuna belly) and capers, breadsticks with smoked or salted fish, potato and ham tortilla, croquettes and scrambled eggs with truffles and sirloin tips, but the patatas bravas is an absolute showstopper. A selection of tapas is around £12 per person. *lalolarestaurante.com*

FROM LEFT: Colmado LaLola interior; paella, Toni Montoliu

Of course, the dish Valencia is most famous for, the one it gave birth to, is paella — the authentic version often bearing no resemblance to the mushy rice and seafood mess so frequently found elsewhere. When the Moors first came to the area in 711, they called it Albufera ('little sea'). Here, they sowed the rich coastal wetlands with rice and slowly, paella emerged from the land. It was created to feed those working there, using rice and anything else that could be found — this meant snails, rabbit, beans, tomatoes and duck. Its name comes from the round, wide metal vessel it's cooked in: a paella.

When I meet Toni Montoliu at his farm four miles from the city, he's wearing traditional Valencian country dress: pin-striped trousers, a scarf wound round the belly (in order to protect the back when stooping in the fields) and a black beret. He shows me the vast paella pans set over fires of orange wood and old vines. "It's important to crisp the meat and the beans, then the liquid is added and cooked for 45 minutes," he says. "So, let's go see my farm."

Aged 65, he makes light work of a ladder and is up on a corrugated iron roof where hundreds of pumpkins have been laid out in the sun. "Everything in my paella is grown in my fields, or reared here. And it's all organic," he says. "Chicken, rabbit, duck, white beans, butter, tomato, snails, sweet paprika, saffron, rosemary, oil and bomba rice. The rice has to be round so it doesn't get overcooked."

Paella is only eaten at lunchtime in Valencia, and on Sundays it's a huge family affair. Guests gather outside under shade eating the farm's peanuts and lupin beans and drinking cold beer. Toni lowers his ear to the paella pan and listens. A few minutes more, he says. When he lowers his ear again he hears the crackling sound he's looking for and there's a toasty smell in the air: it's ready.

Everyone moves inside around long, large tables. The grains of rice are fat and rich with flavour, the meat and beans tender. Toni hovers around the tables, checking everyone is happy and notices I haven't got any *socarrat* — the crunchy crust that forms at the bottom of the pan. He returns with some. "People fight over this," he says.

I ask him how I can try to make the best paella when I return home, given I don't have a farm or a firepit. He pours a glass of Valencian sweet wine and sits down to tell me. "Paella isn't a science," he says. "Paella is a process — like you're making love. Little by little, slow and with passion."

Five Valencia food finds

1

PAELLA

Named after the metal dish in which it's cooked, Spain's national dish started as field food, made from rice and wild country produce such as beans and snail

2

ROSQUILLETAS

Breadsticks made from flour, yeast, salt, oil and water, often served with ham or cheese

3

HORCHATA

An ice-cold, milk-like drink made from tiger nuts, sugar and water

4

ORANGES

These sweet citrus are grown in orchards surrounding the city and are a key component of the local tipple, agua de Valencia

5

ESMORZARET

Valencians relishes this mid-morning snack so much it's almost sacred. It's often a *bocadillo* (sandwich), sometimes accompanied by a small beer

A standard double room at Hotel Marqués House costs from £94 per night, room only. EasyJet flies from Gatwick to Valencia from £45 per person, return without hand luggage.
marqueshouse.com easyjet.com visitvalencia.com

IMAGES: AUDREY GILLIAN

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Neighbourhood

MIAMI

Miami has a reputation for glitz, glamour and grit, but lately it's shaken off some of its rougher edges to embrace all things new. From South Beach to Brickell, there have never been more distinct areas to explore. Words: Pat Riddell

ILLUSTRATION: KERRY HYNDMAN

Something's happened in Miami. In the past decade, the city has reinvented itself with huge investment revamping its neighbourhoods, skyline and waterfront. Construction continues apace, and the likes of Wynwood, Mid-Beach, Brickell and the Design District have changed almost beyond recognition. Cultural attractions have flourished and Miami has become a modern, confident, international metropolis with annual events making it a year-round destination. Enormous cruise ships begin their journeys here to the Caribbean and beyond, but take time to stay ashore and explore its neighbourhoods, and you'll soon get the measure of just how much fun Miami is.

Brickell/Downtown

If anywhere in Miami reflects its recent renaissance, it's the onward march of Brickell. A neighbourhood transformed over the past decade, the occasional low-rise still exists, but construction continues ever upwards — in an area that's just over a square mile, the only way is up. Glass, steel and concrete abound, but there's more to it than its glossy financial district heart.

The luxury Brickell City Centre shopping mall looms large here, a $1bn development that's also home to East Miami, the first overseas property from Hong Kong's Swire Group. The plush decor and clever interiors belie the hotel's workaday exterior, its 352 rooms far removed from any of the city's stuffier business hotels; but its drinking and dining options are perhaps the main draw. There's the sleek Tea Room, home of the Asian Night Brunch (a five-course menu alongside all the Champagne, sake, wine or beer you can drink), and Uruguayan surf-and-turf Quinto La Huella restaurant, but Sugar is the icing on the cake. Situated on the 40th floor, cocktails and views cement Sugar's reputation as one of Miami's best bars, towering over the rest of Brickell and Downtown. Its Balinese-inspired decor and foliage lend it an almost garden party vibe, and those bird's-eye views over the skyscrapers to South Beach and beyond are, arguably, the city's most spectacular.

A short walk across the river in Downtown, the Kimpton Epic attracts both locals and out-of-towners to its rooftop bar and restaurant, Area 31. Arrive towards the end of the week and you'll see DJs cajoling the happy hour crowd, many of whom are holding out for a much sought-after table at the seafood restaurant. Here, local produce and flavours are showcased by South African chef Alex Olivier, while guests look out towards the port where cruise ships are readying themselves for early morning departures.

Stray further north, and you'll see that Downtown isn't all steel and glass. Dating back to 1925, Bayfront Park is a welcome respite, with an amphitheatre, fountain and regular yoga sessions and salsa classes. In the same year the park opened, the nearby Freedom Tower was Miami's tallest building. Standing at 225ft, the Mediterranean Revival-style structure was subsequently considered the 'Ellis Island of the South' for its role in assisting Cuban refugees seeking political asylum from Castro's regime from 1962-74.

Brave the humidity for another 15-minute walk up the coast, past the AmericanAirlines Arena (home to the Miami Heat basketball team), to find the sleek Herzog & de Meuron-designed Pérez Art Museum Miami. Housing what must surely be one of the US's most compelling contemporary art collections, this gallery is proof there's more to Downtown and Brickell than meets the eye.

WHEN IN *Miami*

BOAT TOUR

Seeing Miami from the water is the best way to fully appreciate the city. Watersports Paradise offers a range of boat tours and watersports — a great way to get close to Star Island, Biscayne Bay and the infamous Millionaire's Row. *watersports-paradise.com*

WYNWOOD WALLS

Abandoned warehouses and empty buildings were transformed just over a decade ago as a series of street art installations began to draw visitors in their thousands. The area now thrives with bars, restaurants, shops, galleries and vast, multicoloured murals. *wynwoodmiami.com*

SPORT

With Miami Heat, the Miami Dolphins and the Miami Marlins representing basketball, American football and baseball respectively, sport's never far away in this city. David Beckham's Major League Soccer team is expected to launch in 2020 too.

CUBAN SANDWICH

These hefty bites are a serious business in Miami and while quality remains high everywhere, everyone has their favourite spot. Made with ham, roasted pork, Swiss cheese, mustard and pickles on Cuban bread, you simply can't leave the city without having at least one, or two.

OFF-PEAK MONTHS

The traditional off-peak months (May to September) are often the time to seek out special discounts at spas, restaurants, hotels, museums and more. Check the website for further details. *miamiandbeaches.com/offers/temptations*

ART BASEL

The international contemporary art fair launched in its second host city in 2002, and sees around 80,000 visitors flock to Miami over five days in early December. The fair hosts 260 galleries from 33 countries showcasing works by more than 4,000 artists. It's big. *artbasel.com/miami-beach*

IMAGES: GETTY; 4CORNERS; PRYME PHOTOGRPAHY

South Beach

The quintessential Miami district. Take a pew on Ocean Drive and watch the world go by — towering palm trees sway while joggers work up a sweat, battling for boardwalk space with cyclists and rollerbladers. Volleyball is ever-present and there's even yoga if you get up early enough. However, it's the fun once the sun's gone down that's synonymous with South Beach.

That and the art deco architecture, which prompts Melissa from the Miami Design Preservation League to call it: "an outdoor living museum". The rows of starry hotels along Ocean Drive — Breakwater, Colony, Carlyle — need no introduction, thanks to the photography of the neon signage that's disseminated worldwide, but there are hundreds of other buildings in the style. The fascinating MDPL walking tour introduces a wealth of distinct variations (Mediterranean Revival, Streamline, Miami Modern), as well as the opportunity to learn more about what lies behind the art deco facades.

South Beach's 1980s renaissance, after decades of decline, saw a growing campaign for the preservation of its buildings, alongside an economic revival that restored its reputation as a glitzy playground.

"South Beach was Las Vegas before Las Vegas existed," Melissa adds. And while the gangsters and gambling are long gone, the epitaph still applies as it continues to draw visitors for late-night revelling. Gianni Versace was one of the early trendsetters, buying an Ocean Drive property in 1992, and bringing an A-list cachet to the area, before his death just five years later. The former Versace Mansion is now a 10-suite hotel replete with its gold-tiled swimming pool.

Over on the west side of South Beach, the Mondrian Hotel does its best to liven up its quiet and sedate setting. Check in on a Saturday afternoon in the middle of spring break, and you're guaranteed to find a pool party underway: plenty of toned bodies, designer swimwear, as-expected expensive jewellery, white drapes billowing in the breeze and Miami's skyline in the distance.

But for something more demure, head north a few blocks for dinner at the rooftop restaurant Juvia. Overlooking busy Lincoln Road, you'll get magnificent views across Miami Beach. While the boutiques, high street brands and pavement restaurants thrive below, Juvia's distinct modern Miami flavours flourish. South Beach might appear brash at times, but it's clear the likes of Juvia are adding a layer of culinary chic. Though a patty at the oldest burger joint in town, Cheeseburger Baby, which is just around the corner, is worth every cent of its $9 (£6.95).

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Downtown at night; Room Mate Waldorf Towers Hotel, Ocean Drive; When She Sings cocktail, Area 31, Kimpton Epic

Esquina De La Fama, Eighth Street

RIGHT: Azucar, Eighth Street

Little Havana

Given that Havana is a little more than 200 miles from Miami, it's no surprise the two cities have such close links. The 1959 Cuban Revolution saw a diaspora of over 500,000 Cubans move to the United States in the years that followed — with the vast majority settling in Florida.

Just two miles west of Downtown, Little Havana is a hub of that emigration, centred around Calle Ocho, the heart of the area running from 17th to 13th Avenues. It's a huge contrast to the shiny skyscrapers on the coast and the decadent vibes of South Beach.

"The historic fabric in Little Havana is amazing — 1930s bungalows, 1920s central hallway apartment buildings, coral rock homes, early Miami wood frame houses, and even art deco apartment buildings exist within the neighbourhood," said Christine Rupp, executive director of Dade Heritage Trust, back in 2017 when the district was named a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Miami Culinary Tours is a great way to get a taste of Little Havana's rich pickings. At Agustin Gainza Arts & Tavern, its mom-and-pop shopfront typical of the low-rise buildings that run along Calle Ocho, you'll find Gainza, an artist who's shown his work all over the world, mixing mojitos behind the bar at the back of the gallery. It's this kind of down-to-earth attitude that prevails in Little Havana.

Maximo Gomez Park (Domino Park), built in the mid-1970s, is a landmark in this neighbourhood. Intense, fraught games of dominoes are played here all day long by teams of largely retired locals, smoking cigars and slapping down tiles on the purpose-built tables. And very serious business it is, too. Interfere at your peril.

Tours take in an obligatory beef empanada and a sweet, extremely strong cafe Cubano at El Pub; followed by the ubiquitous and substantial Cuban sandwich at Old's Havana; a mojito at Ball & Chain; *guarapo* (freshly-squeezed sugar cane juice) at Los Pinarenos Fruteria; and huge ice cream cones at Azucar — a whirlwind exploration of this Latin Caribbean enclave that's as satisfying for your appetite as it is for cultural understanding.

Organised tourism to Little Havana is a relatively new thing, with tour buses making inroads in recent years, but rather than being a threat it's evidently helping the area thrive with visitors and locals alike supporting traditional and new businesses. Don't miss Havana's 'factories', where Cuban-style cigars are hand-rolled (the embargo still limits their sale), the Cuban Memorial Boulevard Park where icons are remembered, and the Bay of Pigs Museum about the failed 1961 invasion.

MORE INFO

East Miami. *east-miami.com*
Brickell City Centre. *brickellcitycentre.com*
Kimpton Epic. *epichotel.com*
Bayfront Park. *bayfrontparkmiami.com*
Miami Dade College Museum of Art & Design. *mdcmoad.org*
American Airlines Arena. *aaarena.com*
Pérez Art Museum Miami. *pamm.org*
Miami Design Preservation League. *mdpl.org*
Versace Mansion. *vmmiamibeach.com*
Mondrian South Beach. *mondrianhotels.com*
Juvia. *juviamiami.com*
Cheeseburger Baby. *cheeseburgerbaby.net*
Miami Culinary Tours. *miamiculinarytours.com*
National Trust for Historic Preservation. *savingplaces.org*
Agustin Gainza Arts & Tavern. *agustingainza.com*
Ball & Chain. *ballandchainmiami.com*

Norwegian operates a nonstop service from Gatwick to Miami, operated by a fleet of new Boeing 787 Dreamliners. Fares start from £320 return in economy and £1,109 return in premium, including all taxes and charges. *norwegian.com/uk*
Rooms at East Miami start from $279 (£215), room only. Rooms at the Mondrian South Beach start from $149 (£115), room only. *east-miami.com mondrianhotels.com*

IMAGES: ALAMY; CHRIS BRANT

Šenkova domačija

Turist farm Šenk's homestead in Jezersko
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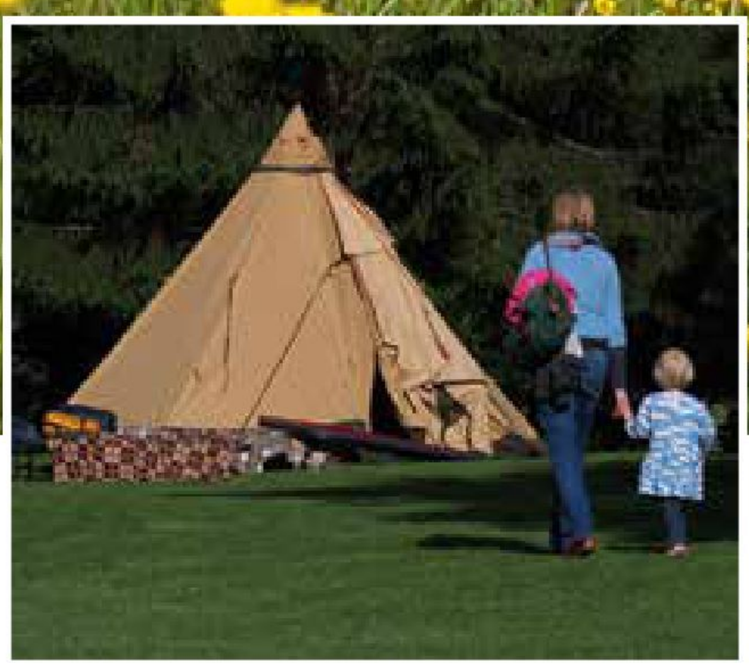

Slovenia is famous for its incredible scenery, but most tourists only visit the capital Ljubljana and perhaps Bled and Bohinj. Yet the country hides some fabulous secrets. Among the best of them is an unspoilt, undiscovered place that's less than an hour from Ljubljana Airport. This is Jezersko, a pristine mountain valley in northern Slovenia. Jezersko, which means 'lakeland' in Slovenian, was covered by a vast glacial lake until an earthquake in the 13th century destroyed the rock barrier surrounding the lake, allowing the water to disperse. Today, there are nearly 40 miles of hiking trails around Jezersko and numerous professional guides (all of whom speak English) to help visitors navigate the area. This is the green pearl of Europe and Šenk's farmsted is inviting you to explore it.

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Sleep

TOKYO

As the Japanese capital prepares to host the 2020 Olympics, the spotlight is on its characterful places to bed down, from reimagined ryokans to high-concept capsule hotels. Words: Stephanie Cavagnaro

Tiny izakaya pubs, Shinto shrines, *kawaii* (cute) culture — Japan's greatest pleasures are all on glorious show in Tokyo. This is a city of distinct neighbourhoods: cosplay-cool teenagers descend en masse on Harajuku, Ginza's flashy shopping attracts Dior divas and Akhibara is the base for outre *otaku* (fan) culture. The city's hotels are just as varied as its hoods, too, ranging from bijou boutiques to themed hostels, and no matter where you decide to doze, Tokyo is one of the world's safest cities, where free smartphones are even included in some rooms. Many rates are per person, rather than per room, so prices can be steep, but stay for less at capsule hotels or budget ryokans (inns). If you've got yen to spend, book one of the city's OTT suites or design dens, safe in the knowledge that wherever you choose to stay, the service and attention to detail will be world-class.

IMAGES: GETTY. *ACCOMMODATION TAX: ¥100 PER PERSON PER NIGHT FOR ROOMS BETWEEN ¥10,000-15,000, ¥200 FOR ANYTHING OVER. NO TAX UNDER ¥10,000.

For zen z's

£££ HOSHINOYA TOKYO

Cue the crème de la crème. The city's first luxury ryokan has five-star frills without being flashy. It takes all the elements of a ryokan — sliding shōji screens, tatami floors, seasonal food and hot springs — and pimps them up. The mats are scented with sandalwood; seafood such as sea bream tartare is served on lacquerware in the 10-table restaurant; and then there's the 17th floor onsen. Here, salty hot-spring water is pumped from 5,000ft below ground to this sleek, black-tiled spa, which leads to an al fresco sky-view tower. The 84 guest rooms come in three categories, one of which, Kiku, offers expansive digs with deep, square baths and low, hibernation-worthy mattresses. Each floor flaunts a lounge, plying guests with nigiri rice balls, hojicha tea and mochi snacks, while cultural activities range from sake tastings to tea ceremonies.
ROOMS: From ¥72,000 (£487), room only.
hoshinoya.com/tokyo/en

For exclusive experiences

£££ PALACE HOTEL TOKYO

Tokyo's grande dame has been a showstopper since it opened in 1961 — it's easy to see why. Resembling a lavish private residence, the lobby offers a yawning swathe of grey marble, glass and moss-green accents, while the 290 regal guest rooms reveal kimono-motif carpets. Over half boast balconies — a rare treat in Tokyo — some with Imperial Palace views. Club room guests have access to the 19th-floor lounge, with afternoon tea and cocktails thrown in. The hotel's 10 bars and restaurants include a tempura station, while Japan's first Evian Spa is light-filled and Zen-like. New packages include meditating with a monk or swimming with an Olympian.

ROOMS: From ¥55,000 (£385), room only.

en.palacehoteltokyo.com

For tastemakers

££ TRUNK HOTEL

The cool kid on the Shibuya block is all about sustainability. 'Locally sourced', 'recycled' and 'eco-friendly' are phrases that apply to most things in the hotel, from glassware crafted from recycled light bulbs to Shibuya-made honey (available from the in-house lifestyle store). The bar is lined with upcycled cork stools — order the Getting Trunk, a cocktail mixed with Ogasawara rum and hōjicha tea — or lap up locavore life at Trunk Kitchen, which serves health-conscious cuisine like an on-trend vegan breakfast. Each of the 15 guest rooms is different, ranging from a simple standard affair to a sprawling, dual-level terrace suite with a plunge pool. And to lure you away from the Trunk experience, excursions include fish market tours and home-cooked meals with locals.

ROOMS: From €261 (£224), room only. *designhotels.com*

For dancing queens

££ HOTEL KOÉ

Set amid the glass-and-chrome towers of Shibuya, Hotel Koé welcomes guests into an industrial maze of exposed pipes and polished concrete, interspersed with pops of light wood. In contrast to the sunny lower floors, the 10 rooms above throw up a dark-and-stormy vibe: charcoal walls, mood lighting, grey-tiled bathrooms. They range in size from 'S' to 'XL' — the latter a corner room with a lengthy lounge. But it's not just about R&R: there are spaces dedicated to food, fashion and music. A bakery-restaurant plates colourful breakfasts like smoked salmon over eggs benedict, a shop stocks own-brand apparel, while an events space sees guest DJs spinning the decks at weekends.

ROOMS: From £195, B&B. *hotelkoe.com/en*

NEST
KYOTO

For sauna and sleep

£ DO-C EBISU

The do-c concept can be summed up in two words: sleep and sauna. Revamped last year, the capsule hotel's newly pared-back look means plenty of plywood and concrete. Check in and receive a bag with a towel, pyjamas, toothbrush and toiletries — for that sleepover feel. The capsules (separated into men's and women's areas) are retro-beige and stacked two-high with just enough space to sit up in. Finnish-style saunas on the ninth and third floors are welcome additions, scented with mint essence and heated to a scorching 90C. They include cooling showers, ranging from 30C to a frigid 15C. This isn't the spot to sweat the small stuff.
ROOMS: From ¥4,900 (£33) for an overnight stay (including sauna use), ¥1,500 (£10) for a one-hour nap and ¥1,000 (£6) for an hour in the sauna. *do-c.jp/en*

For bibliophiles on a budget

£ BOOK AND BED SHINJUKU

Savants can sleep easy at this bonkers hostel, where bookcases double as compact capsule beds. This branch of the Tokyo hostel chain, opened last May in neon-lit Shinjuku, follows its signature industrial chic aesthetic: concrete floors, exposed pipes, plywood shelves packed with thousands of tomes. The 55 guest rooms range from singles, accessed via a ladder, to king size. The cafe has a theme colour: try the avocado on jet-black toast.
ROOMS: From £35, room only. *bookandbedtokyo.com*

For Japanophiles

£ ANDON RYOKAN

Catch some z's in old-school Japanese style at Andon, a traditional inn with a modern twist. Its 24 no-frills rooms contain futons and tatami mats, while bathrooms are communal; elsewhere, a pop-art-tiled whirlpool bath can be booked for a soak. The ryokan also serves as an antiques showroom: look for the 'lucky' fukusuke dolls in public spaces. And for a further cultural nose-dive, book a flower-arranging session or calligraphy lesson.
ROOMS: From ¥6,500 (£44), room only. *andon.co.jp*

For rooftop hangs

£ ONE@TOKYO

You can't miss it: an entrance latticed with timber planks is the creative opener, hinting at what lies beyond. This warehouse-style set-up has 142 minimalist rooms, ranging from studios to lofts and suites. Each has a smartphone with a city guide, and free calls to 16 countries (including the UK). When the phone guides you back to base, tuck into a six-course meal or head to the rooftop for full-frontal Tokyo Skytree views.
ROOMS: From ¥10,000 (£67), B&B. *onetokyo.com/en*

For fine diners

£££ FOUR SEASONS HOTEL TOKYO AT MARUNOUCHI

Located on a quiet corner in fast-paced Marunouchi, this is the place for laid-back luxury. The 57 neutral-toned rooms are replete with floor-to-ceiling windows and Japanese-print carpets, while the marble bathrooms are designed for lingering. But don't stay too long: seventh-floor Motif Restaurant & Bar is a stunner. Masterminded by Michelin-starred chef Hiroshi Nakamichi, it serves farm-to-table French cuisine fused with the seasonal flavours of Hokkaido Prefecture. The 10-course tasting menu has included the likes of lily root with plum and Madeira, while yuzu pancakes with hojicha sauce is a breakfast highlight — to be savoured while watching bullet trains zip through Tokyo Station.

ROOMS: From £370, B&B. *fourseasons.com*

For design devotees

££ CLASKA

Claska is no cookie-cutter hotel. Each of its 20 rooms are the brainchild of a different architect (or designer). Themes range from 'modern' (clean-lines, airy spaces, Japanese-style furniture) to 'tatami' (a pared-back, modern take on classic ryokan decor) and 'story' (inspired by Japanese novels and concepts). Located in the hip, southwestern hood of Nakameguro, this hotel is a little far-flung, but it's a destination in itself: you'll also find several galleries, a rooftop terrace hosting summer film screenings, a shop selling lifestyle products, and Kiokuh, which serves French-inspired fare like roasted wagyu with potato puree. And for forays into the city, there's a fleet of tokyobike bicycles.

ROOMS: From ¥13,000 (£90), room only. *claska.com/en*

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TOP 15

Trips of a *Lifetime*

Want an unforgettable experience? Somewhere that changes the way you see the world? We've curated a list of some of the greatest itineraries in travel — those timeless destinations that keep you reaching for your passport time and time again. Whether you tackle Everest, set off on an Arctic expedition or dive into the Great Barrier Reef, we've got plenty of intrepid inspiration

IMAGE: GETTY

EXPERIENCES

Maasai Mara

Kenya's fabled Maasai Mara, home to the Great Migration, is a wildlife wonderland. Buckle up for a safari drive across the savannah to steal glances at hyena, wildebeest, zebra, elephant and even the rare white rhino. Words: Farida Zeynalova

Chuk chuk chuk chuk chuk. And silence.

Joseph Koyie, my guide, turns off the engine and rummages for his binoculars all without breaking his stare. His eyes are wide, his mouth ajar, and he flutters his free hand to signal that there's something up ahead. Suddenly, everything is very still.

"I can't believe this. It's been such a long time since I last saw one," he whispers. It takes me a few seconds to clock what he's in awe of. And then I see it. A few yards from our car, grazing under the shadow of an acacia tree: a white rhino. For the next few minutes, we watch in awe. The rare mammal — nearing extinction due to rampant poaching — couldn't be any less interested in us if he tried. But, he's no less mesmerising for his indifference.

It's dusk in the Maasai Mara in southwestern Kenya, and I'm out on my first ever safari drive. On this balmy November's day, the last rays of sun are slowly ebbing away, the clouds now puffs of purple and red. Out here in the vast expanse of the savannah, it's just us, the rhino, and the odd impala. It's serenity I've never felt before.

"There are only nine white rhinos left here," explains Joseph, snapping me out of my *hakuna matata* moment. Being this close to Africa's plethora of storybook animals feels both magical and lucky, and Joseph knows just when and where to go to witness this vast wonderland at its wildest.

The 30-something guide and head naturalist at Sanctuary Olonana is also a Maasai warrior, and lives in the nearby village of Loita with his wife and children. Today, he's swapped his traditional tribesman's shuka shawl for the lodge's all-beige uniform. When I ask him if he'd ever leave this place, he restarts the engine, puts away his tattered map and replies with an unyielding shake of the head.

The next day, it's an early start and as we head off, Joseph promises big things. "We won't go longer than 10 minutes without seeing an animal here," he grins proudly.

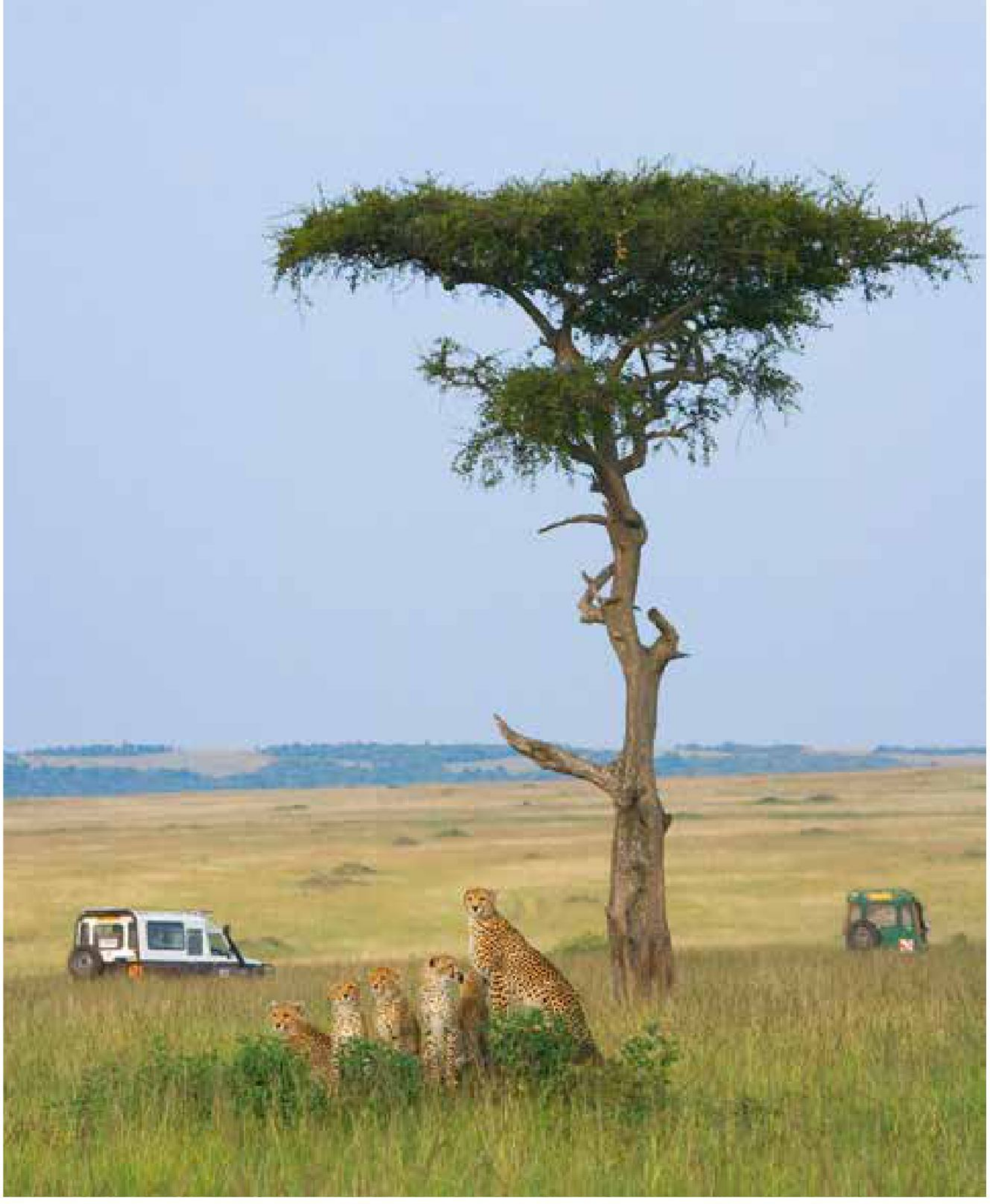
A few minutes into our morning, a pack of mongooses emerge from the red oat grass up ahead, running around and squealing. A little further on, we see a dozing spotted hyena and I stretch over the side of the car to get a closer look. He grumbles.

Up ahead is a wildebeest: the bulky icon of the annual mass-migration that moves north through the Serengeti, over the Tanzania-Kenya border, and into the Maasai Mara. "This animal was made using the leftovers of all the others," Joseph jokes. "He has the face of a locust, the tail of a zebra, the belly of a cow and the beard of a goat."

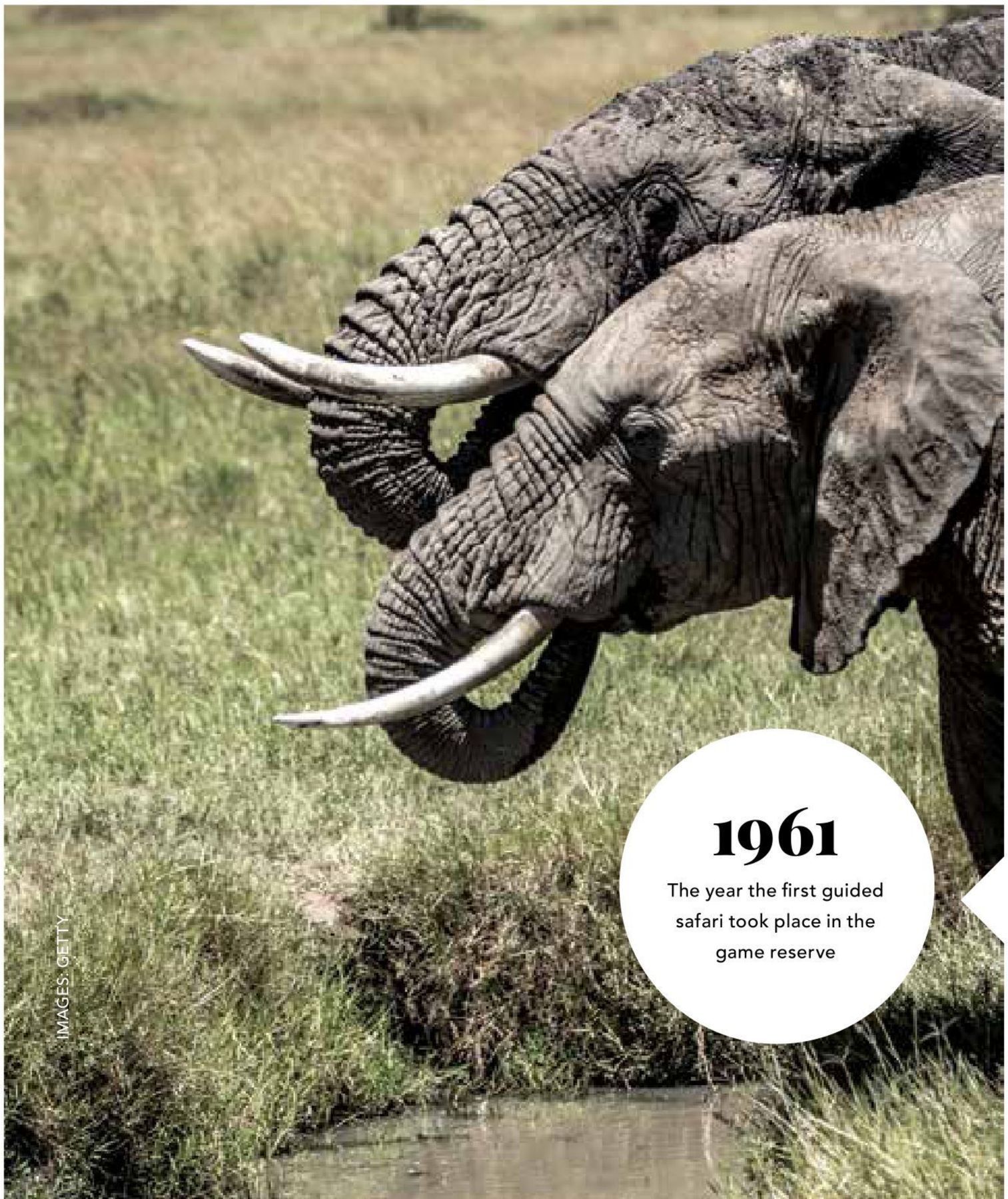
And just moments later, we spot a family of elephants. They trudge across the road, almost within touching distance of our car. We follow them to a muddy pool where, for the next 30 minutes, we watch them fill up their trunks with water and douse each other's thick, wrinkly skin.

In these last few moments of my first safari, the Maasai Mara seems the ultimate cliche — a dreamlike expanse of animals, sunset and vast, rolling savanna. But it couldn't be more real. As the light drains from the plains, the elephants retreat; their water party over, they begin their journey home. Joseph restarts the engine, and we follow suit. Chuk chuk chuk chuk chuk.

HOW TO DO IT: Abercrombie & Kent offers one night at Giraffe Manor in Nairobi and three nights at Sanctuary Olonana in the Maasai Mara on an all-inclusive basis, including internal and international flights with British Airways. From £5,995 per person. *abercrombiekent.co.uk*



PREVIOUS PAGES: Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Maasai warrior on the shore of Lake Magadi; cheetah family, Maasai Mara; African elephants; road through the Maasai Mara; Great Wildebeest Migration



IMAGES: GETTY

Safari in style

Beauty & the wildebeest
It's Africa's most iconic wildlife spectacle: the migration of around 1.4 million wildebeest, zebra and eland crossing the Kenya-Tanzanian border, as they chase better grazing. The journey covers around 1,800 miles, and usually happens between July and October.

Up, up & away
There's something magical about seeing the Maasai Mara from above. Get up at the crack of dawn to watch your balloon being fired up, then hop on board for an hour-long flight. Back on solid ground, a cooked breakfast with Champagne awaits. *maraballooning.com*

Local life
Get a feel for Maasai culture by heading to the village of Olonana. Here, villagers teach local customs: from the *adumu*, a traditional jumping dance performed at coming-of-age ceremonies, to making a fire using stones and sticks.

Rolling on the river
The Mara river can be a frontier of life and death for wildebeest during the Great Migration — thanks to the world's largest crocodiles roaming its banks. Flowing 245 miles through Kenya and Tanzania, it's also the stomping ground of some 4,000 hippos, and your guide will know the best viewpoints.

Walk on the wild side
A walking tour with a naturalist will help you appreciate the smaller things — like signs of animals you'd fail to notice otherwise, bird calls and the creepy crawlies living around the wetlands. You can even plant a tree before heading back home.

Raising a glass
After a game drive, guides usually finish the day at one of the vantage points overlooking the plains. This is the time to kick back with sundowner, admire the searing hues of the Kenyan sunset and momentarily forget your worries.

1961
The year the first guided safari took place in the game reserve

ANCIENT WONDERS

Borobudur Temple

This central Javanese landmark is the world's largest Buddhist temple. Built in the style of a *mandala*, the symbol of the Buddhist universe, walking the nine circular stacked platforms feels like an act of meditation. Exploration reveals more than 500 statues of Buddha, and carved stone reliefs depicting vivid scenes of cause and effect: an eighth- and ninth-century tableau of life lessons that ascend from teachings on human desire to the sky-scraping realm of the gods and nirvana. Nirvana or not, Indonesia's most famous landmark can get busy. Stay overnight nearby to make a specially ticketed pre-dawn raid before opening time (6am), to best appreciate the misty marvel that British Lieutenant Governor Thomas Stamford Raffles must have experienced when he stumbled upon the temple in 1814.

TIP: Weekdays in the rainy season (November-March) see fewer tourists, but more mosquitos. *borobudurpark.com*

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Borobudur Temple at twilight, Yogyakarta; trail through the Khumbu Valley with Everest in the background

EXPERIENCES

Everest

Climbing the world's highest mountain is technical, complex and terrifying. An attempt on the summit is fraught with unimaginable danger. It's thought around 600 people successfully summit the behemoth each year, yet a similar number fail to do the same. Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first men to reach Everest's peak on 29 May 1953 — an unfathomable feat with their modest equipment. Today's climbers have the advantage of new technology, but cutting-edge gear aside, Everest can be unpredictable and unforgiving. Once the preserve of hardy professionals, Everest's lower slopes now attract thousands every year attempting to reach base camp. Don't be fooled by the commercialism of the route — you'll be trekking for around eight hours a day at altitudes of 18,000ft. If you ever need a harsh reminder that Mother Nature's in charge, then Everest's your answer.

Amazon River

Green, mostly pristine, but not, as many imagine, serene: there's nowhere more loudly, vitally alive than the Amazon. An overnight stay on its shores marks visitors with the indelible memory of insects buzzing at power tool decibels. The best cruises allow for trips at dawn in small dugouts into the river's narrower tributaries, through thick tunnels of jungle vegetation where jaguar and caiman prowl. Savvy local guides often know where to find pink dolphins and giant river otters. But for the most part, an Amazon River cruise isn't about ticking off exotic species, it's about slowing down and tuning in to nature's most incredible broadcast.

Hawaii

It's a rare visitor who doesn't fall for the adventurous soul and natural drama of the 50th US state. Among Hawaii's six main islands, there are soaring mountains that claw the landscape, golden beaches fringing the shoreline, tumbling waterfalls, thudding surf and misty greenery where adventure lurks almost everywhere. Spend days on the volcanic archipelago paddling behind turtles, snorkelling technicolour reefs and falling for the aloha charm. From Maui's beach-blessed shoreline to Oahu's epic surf and the wildlife-rich nature reserves of Molokai, few places capture the raw power of nature like Hawaii.

IMAGE: GETTY; AWL IMAGES

NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

Great Barrier Reef

The world's largest coral reef system pulses with a staggering diversity of marine life. Dive into a first-timer's tips for navigating this underwater world. Words: Tamsin Wressell

THIS WAS VERY MUCH A 'BOOK NOW, LOGISTICS LATER' TRIP. I'd never dived before, and just a month before I flew to Brisbane, I got in touch with Oyster Diving in London. I spent a few evenings in an art deco swimming pool in Soho kitted out in scuba gear, and a weekend in a lake near Heathrow to complete my course in time.

I PLANNED TO HOP BETWEEN ISLANDS IN QUEENSLAND AND DIVE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE REEF. Most days, I'd wake up early to catch a ferry out to a new island. I'd stay there either for the day or a few nights, then make my way to the mainland to catch another ferry the next morning.

EVERY ISLAND WAS DIFFERENT, BUT I GOT INTO A ROUTINE STARTING WITH SNORKELLING THE REEF AT SUNRISE. The rest of the day involved more snorkelling, scuba diving and sea kayaking. I'd only stop to eat, consuming just enough to give me the energy to get back out there again.

MY FIRST DIVE WAS TERRIFYING. I actually called it off. Diving in the ocean, it turns out, is very different to diving in a swimming pool or still lake. The conditions made it really difficult to descend, so I got back on the boat and hopped out in calmer waters closer to the shore. My nerves hadn't calmed though — the instructor held my hand for the full 60 minutes of the dive.

THERE ARE PEOPLE LIVING IN QUEENSLAND WHO REALLY CARE ABOUT THE REEF'S HEALTH AND FUTURE. I met a lot of people whose lives revolve around educating others and fighting the effects of climate change and coral bleaching. Though each dive was beautiful and filled with an incredible diversity of coral and marine life, it felt very important not to take anything for granted.

ON MY FIRST DAY I CAUGHT A SMALL BOAT OUT TO FRASER ISLAND. On the way, a couple of humpback whales surfaced right beside us. After grabbing our snorkels, we listened to instructions from the expert guide to ensure the encounter was ethical (establishing a safe distance and enabling the whales to control the interaction), and bobbed in the ocean as they swam around us for the best part of half an hour. It was surreal — a year later, I still don't think I've processed the experience.

HOW TO DO IT: Emirates flies from Heathrow to Brisbane Airport in Queensland, with a stopover in Dubai, from £700 per person. *emirates.com oysterdiving.com queensland.com coralwatch.org*

10%

of the world's fish species are found on the reef

Heart Reef
RIGHT: Green turtle

Diver’s checklist

Manta rays

Eagle rays, bull rays and cownose rays can also all be spotted along Queensland’s Capricorn Coast, but with a wingspan of up to 20ft, manta rays are undoubtedly the most impressive rays to see. Lady Elliot Island is the place to go; it’s a feeding and cleaning ground for mantas.

Humpback whales

Between July and October, mother humpback whales nurse their calves in the warm, calm waters of Hervey Bay before migrating to Antarctica. To encounter these beautiful beasts, check your boating company is responsible and it should have an expert guide on board, too.

Turtles

Six of seven turtle species — all of which are endangered — live along the Great Barrier Reef. From January to May, green turtle and loggerhead turtle hatchlings emerge from many of the islands’ beaches, including Heron Island, and make their way to the water.

Sharks

Of the 440 known species of shark, around 170 of them reside on the Great Barrier Reef. More than 50 species can be found in Queensland. Black tip, white tip and grey reef sharks are all fairly common, but look out for the ornately mottle-patterned and bearded wobbegong.

Giant clams

Hard on the outside, soft and vibrantly coloured on the inside, giant clams flourish in these warm waters. Once they find a spot, they stay there for life, growing up to 5ft in length, weighing up to 250kg and living for over 100 years. No two giant clams have the same colouration.

900

islands and more than 2,900 individual reefs make up the Great Barrier Reef

IMAGES: GETTY

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NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

Bolivia

The world's largest salt flats are fundamentally a whole lot of nothing — which is, paradoxically, why they're so fascinating. Weird and surreal, you might just be convinced that Salar de Uyuni exists in a parallel universe. When its surface is coated in a drizzle of rain, the vast and empty white crust transforms into a mammoth, kaleidoscopic mirror, reflecting the sky and anything on the horizon, setting the stage for dozens of imagery illusions. This is geology at its most sublime: packed with 10 billion tonnes of sodium chloride, the flats sprawl at a dizzying Andean altitude of nearly 12,00ft, and are so extraordinarily flat that NASA chooses to calibrate satellite sensors here. Unsurprisingly, it's also a major centre of salt extraction — even nearby hotels are crafted from its salt.

Iguazu Falls

This dramatic chain of waterfalls, strung 1.7 miles along the border between Brazil and Argentina, sends vivid rainbows shooting to the sky in a trippy technicolour mirage. How you want to witness this elemental drama is up to you. You could walk the boardwalk to the Argentinian Devil's Throat — the highest section of the falls. Then there are adrenalin-pumping boat rides that get within metres of the ferocious falls. Hiking trails that weave through the rainforest and onto a suspended platform highlight Iguazu's magnitude, but to truly grasp the incredible scope of the falls, duck in and out of the spray in a helicopter for the ride of your life. *iguazuargentina.com*

The Arctic

This is terra incognita compared to the Antarctic: much of the high Arctic remains unmapped. The fabled Northwest Passage, the ice-choked route that claimed the 1845 Franklin expedition has, until recently, remained off the map for most tourists. Cruise ships are making cautious inroads, but this is still a place of isolation and wonder where, in summer, you can board a small ship to cross the magnetic pole with nothing in sight but a swirling green blanket of aurora. Shore excursions cross miniature boreal 'forests' of dwarf shrubs, mosses and lichens, bringing you within sniffing distance of Arctic fox, hare and musk ox that have barely, if ever, encountered humans — and within safe sight of polar bears.

IMAGE: GETTY

Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia

EXPERIENCES

Japan

Where else can you meditate with Buddhist monks, meet a geisha, master the art of matcha tea, and learn to make sushi all in one visit? When it comes to standout experiences, Japan delivers enough to last a lifetime. Words: Stephanie Cavagnaro

Zen Buddhism, Eihei-ji

"Wake up!" orders a monk. The unholy hour is 3.30am. I fumble with blankets, stiff from sleeping on buckwheat seed-filled pillows and tatami mats. "Wake up please!" he repeats, even more loudly. It's late October and the cold in my room is as startling as my human alarm clock.

Eihei-ji ('the temple of eternal peace') has no intention of leaving me in peace this morning. Set in cedar-covered mountains near Japan's northwest coast, the 13th-century monastery is a centre for the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism. I'm here for the one-night Sanro programme, which offers the unique opportunity to learn the art of sitting.

I change out of my yukata robe into a jumper and jeans for a bracingly early session of *zazen*, or seated meditation. The night before, Reverend Taiken Yokoyama had explained the importance of allowing thoughts to pass without dwelling on them. "It's not step-by-step meditation, which is easy to understand because there's a goal," he'd said. "Enlightenment is created by the condition of the moment, and we can only live in this moment. That's why Dōgen said practice and enlightenment are one."

Eihei-ji was founded in 1244 by Zen Master Dōgen. Today, it's home to nearly 150 ascetic monks who devote themselves to his teachings. "Dōgen wrote how to practise each of our actions — even how to wash our teeth," Reverend Yokoyama had told us. "This kind of teaching and this kind of life has created Japanese customs, from tea ceremonies to flower arrangement."

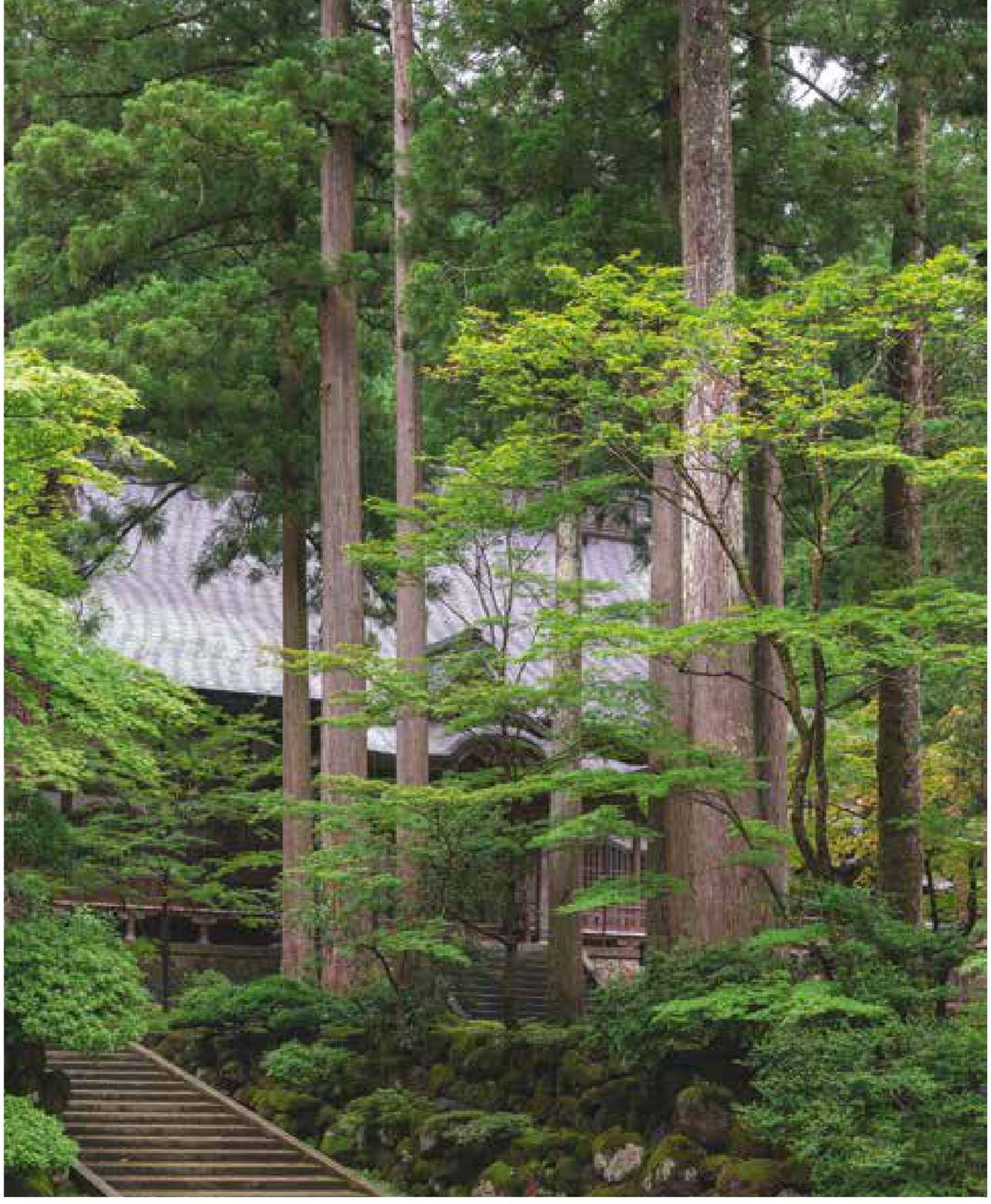
My group of five walk single-file behind Taizen, a black-garbed monk, towards the *zendo* (sitting hall). "In that place, you can't create a single sound, even clothing or walking," he whispers. Following a series of bows, we approach a raised wooden platform in the dimly lit room. In a similar space within the monastery, trainee monks eat, sleep and meditate on these unyielding surfaces. I sit on a plump cushion to more easily assume the half lotus position before spinning clockwise to face a wall, remembering some of the Sōtō school's teachings: sitting upright and holding a 45-degree downward gaze.

Zazen begins with the toll of a bell. I strive to just sit, but I'm hungry. The night before, we'd eaten a modest shōjin ryōri vegan meal, served in a series of lacquered bowls: miso, pickles, stewed vegetables, fried tofu and black beans. Sitting in silence, I caught myself counting the beans as I picked each one up with chopsticks: 21.5.

I study the texture of the wall and wriggle uneasily when my legs scream for mercy. Unsure of where to focus, I close my eyes, then wake with a jolt as I nearly fall backwards. "Many thoughts are coming and going," Reverend Yokoyama had explained the night before. "But we don't try to grasp them, just leave them as is."

Gradually, I'm getting it. Thoughts pass in a trance-like stupor. Am I rocking? My lower half numbs. A monk walks behind bearing a *kyōsaku*, a stick used to strike sleepy sitters. How long has it been? Twenty minutes? As if to answer to my question, a series of gongs and drums sound, bringing our 40-minute session to an end.

Outside, the morning rain has stopped and dawn tickles the tiled roofs and crimson maples. "Zen is quite special because you don't need all the bows and prayers to reach nirvana," a Singaporean Buddhist in my group declares as we leave. "True Zen can be eating or walking." I think of my 21.5 beans. Enlightenment has been here the whole time. I just had to notice. *daihonzan-eiheiji.com/en*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Buddhist monk praying inside a temple; Eihei-ji; matcha tea; window with paper screen; Hozenji Yokocho, Osaka

IMAGES: GETTY

Meet the Geisha, Kanazawa

Lady Baba, landlady of Kaikaro teahouse

IN KANAZAWA, THE YOUNGEST GEISHA IS 19 YEARS OLD — she's like a beautiful Japanese doll. The oldest is 84, and most of my guests choose her because she's very charming. I even have a reservation for her in 2020.

KYOTO HAS A SCHOOL TO TRAIN GEISHAS FROM 15 YEARS OLD, but Kanazawa doesn't, so geishas go to an individual master's house and take lessons one by one every single day. Teahouses are like agents for geishas.

MY TEAHOUSE IS 200 YEARS OLD and it's a treasure for Kanazawa. It's the highest ranking in the city, with two guest rooms — the red room and the VIP blue room. Guests with bodyguards use that one.

GEISHAS PAINT THEIR FACES WHITE because a long time ago there was no electricity, but it was necessary to look beautiful by candlelight. This is still adopted today, and it takes 20 to 30 minutes for a geisha to put on make-up. Next is the kimono. Many tourists wear a rental kimono made from polyester, but our kimono is made completely from silk.

I DO NOT USE A WIG — THIS IS REAL HAIR, so I have to go to a beauty salon every morning to have my hair set; it's like a mushroom. Many geishas, however, wear a wig made from human hair that fits each of their heads.

CAN GEISHAS GET MARRIED? Yes, we can. But if I say I have a boyfriend, my popularity will go down very quickly. Guests never ask about our background — it's always a mystery.

HOW TO DO IT: Geisha Evenings in Kanazawa has tickets for a 90-minute dance and music performance plus a lesson on geisha culture from ¥6,500 (£44). *geishaevenings.jp*

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FROM LEFT: Conveyor belt sushi restaurant, Osaka; maiko (apprentice geisha), Kyoto

Sushi lesson, Osaka

Cheery, kimono-clad Machiko welcomes would-be sushi masters into her minimalist home for lessons on *washoku* (traditional Japanese cuisine). "Do you know umami?" she asks during my visit. "To describe umami is difficult, it's delicious and sensitive." We learn about the savoury flavour while honing in on a key element of *washoku*: sushi. Machiko claps as I roll the perfect *tamagoyaki* omelette, takes me through the intricate rules of making *nigiri-zushi* by pressing rice with two fingers then draping a thick slice of fresh salmon atop, and looks pleased as I delicately stuff sticky rice into spongy, deep-fried tofu pockets. Our colourful sushi — some tied with thin strips of nori, others spinkled with sesame — is displayed on long, black lacquered trays, accompanied by a pink pile of pickled ginger. Served with miso, it offers the perfect balance of nutrition and aesthetics. We tuck in; hard work never tasted so good. *washoku-hc.com*

Tea ceremony, Matsumoto

"I've done this for 45 years and I'm still learning," says sensei Soshin as she prepares to demonstrate *sadō* ('the way of tea'). I'm ushered through Hyakuchiku-tei teahouse's small crawl-in entrance to an alcove featuring a burnt-orange flower arrangement and calligraphed scroll. We kneel in formal *seiza* style on a tatami floor, as sticky *wagashi* snacks filled with red bean paste are doled out. Soshin displays a mastery of her craft: she gracefully cleans tools, drops vibrant matcha (green tea powder) from a bamboo ladle into a bowl and adds just-right hot water. The liquid is rapidly mixed with a bamboo whisk until it becomes a thin tea. I rotate the bowl 90 degrees and watch as it swirls with satisfying bubbles before taking a sip. It's creamy, mildly bitter with whispers of sweet. But this is about more than a cuppa — it's a lesson in Japanese culture, from presentation to craftsmanship. And I'm still learning, too. *matchagdn.com* *visitmatsumoto.com/en*

MORE INFO

The Japan Rail Pass (seven-, 14- and 21-day) covers most bullet trains. Buy a voucher from TopTours before travel. *tteuk.com*

Nohi Bus travels between Takayama, Shirakawa-go and Kanazawa. *nouhibus.co.jp*

Lonely Planet Japan. RRP: £18.99

Insight Guides Japan. RRP: £19.99

seejapan.co.uk

HOW TO DO IT

COX & KINGS offers a 15-night trip to Japan, costing £3,790 per person based on two sharing. It includes flights from London (into Tokyo/out from Osaka), 15 nights' four/five-star B&B, transfers, excursions, train journeys, and an English-speaking tour guide. *coxandkings.co.uk*

IMAGES: GETTY

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NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

Grand Canyon

Rack up the miles on a Rim-to-Rim hike of Arizona's Grand Canyon that includes an overnight stay in the gorge with stargazing, plus cooling waterfalls — a welcome surprise in one of the hottest, driest places on Earth. Words: Aaron Millar

Looking down from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, a 277-mile long, 10-mile wide golden gorge snakes beneath me. At sunrise, the rocks blush pink and appear sullen; at sunset, they glow like the embers of a fire — it's like peering into the heart of the Earth. The US poet Harriet Monroe called it 'the abode of gods', adding that 'it made a coward of me'. There's perhaps nowhere else at once so humbling and vast, so cowering and uplifting.

But the South Rim is also a madhouse. Six million visitors a year come to Grand Canyon National Park and most never stray from this view.

My Rim-to-Rim hike is one of America's most spectacular adventures: 24 miles from the northern to the southern edge of the canyon. But it's not for the faint-hearted. With roughly 5,000ft of ascent and descent, it's the equivalent of walking from the bottom to the top of London's The Shard five times, with nearly a marathon's worth of hiking in between. But it offers solitude: less than 2% of visitors spend a night on the canyon floor. If you want the Grand Canyon minus the crowds, this is the way to do it.

Starting on the North Rim — the wilder, quieter side — I'd set off in the early-morning dark and descended a narrow, winding path. Dawn clouds lifted as the sun rose, revealing a hidden world, imperceptible from the rim, pyramid-like mountains all around.

A few miles after reaching the bottom, I came across Ribbon Falls, one of the Grand Canyon's secret spots. Hidden away from the main path, this ice-cold waterfall is in the middle of one of the planet's driest and hottest places. I climbed to a hollow behind the falls, stripped off and jumped into the bracing shower.

But this wasn't the only surprise on my hike. Phantom Ranch is the only accommodation in the gorge itself, a collection of idyllic 1920s stone cabins with fluffy beds, warm showers and home-cooked meals. It turns the Rim-to-Rim ordeal into the business class of backpacking. After 13 miles and seven hard hours on the trail, I'd been welcomed with refreshing beers and a steak dinner, followed by a sky alight with stars (the Grand Canyon is one of only a handful of International Dark Sky Parks in the country).

But getting into the Grand Canyon is one thing — getting back out is something else altogether. Having crossed the Colorado River after breakfast, I'd spent the day zigzagging the gruelling 5,000ft to the top. As I'd climbed, the views spread out majestically: stone towers rose around me like cathedral spires. I couldn't keep my eyes off the rocks. Written into these sheer walls is the most complete geologic record on the planet: two billion years of the Earth's natural history etched into stone like a photocopy of time. Reading into the cliff layers, I could see oceans rise and fall, and deserts turn to mountains and crumble again.

Finally, I'm at the top. A fellow hiker turns to me: "From up here," she says, "you have no clue how grand it really is." She's right. To witness the gods from afar is inspiring, but I've walked among them.

HOW TO DO IT: Arizona Outback Adventures' three-day Grand Canyon Rim to Rim hiking tour includes a night camping on the North Rim and a night at Phantom Ranch, all equipment, meals, transportation from Phoenix and the services of an guide. From $1,595 per person, with departures from May to September. American Airlines has a daily direct flight from Heathrow to Phoenix from £942. *aoa-adventures.com americanairlines.co.uk*

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Native American tribes are traditionally associated with the Grand Canyon, including the Hualapai and Havasupai

IMAGE: AWL IMAGES

North Rim of the Grand Canyon

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ANCIENT WONDERS

Stonehenge

Worshipped by everyone from pagans to ravers, the world's most iconic prehistoric site is all things to all people: a 5,000-year-old place of mystery on which to project human ideals. Words: Sarah Barrell

The stones are shrouded. A dense dawn fog lingers defiantly over Salisbury Plain, obscuring the prehistoric monument. We pick our way across its cursus — the ceremonial earthworks that rise to encircle Stonehenge's arrangement of monoliths. At the outlying lone Heel Stone, I have the perfect sight line along the solstitial axis around which the stone circle is aligned, its familiar toothy tomb silhouette now cutting unmistakably through the haze some 70 metres away.

The legendary circle of trilithons forms a familiar figure. Of the UK's hundreds of stone circles, these lintel-topped upright stones have become a universal symbol for Stone Age man. But they're far from a dead icon. At their epicentre, the stones loom so very large, a startling collective presence watching and encircling, a joining of monolithic limbs. At look-but-don't-touch distance, their thick coating of a hundred-plus lichen species renders them curiously alive: barnacled, creviced, prehistoric pachydermic creatures. Their sheer weight bears down in both magnificent tonnage and crackling gravitas: what dedication, what shared ritual drove them into being?

Erected by a succession of Neolithlic generations spanning over a thousand years, this staggering, devotional feat of collective human action pulses powerfully across five millennia. Standing in their midst, time collapses, replaced by the keenest, skin-prickling sense of being plugged deeply into the past. I'm shown Bronze Age dagger shapes carved into the stone, as well as the marks made by more recent visitors, including the 17th-century signature of Sir Christopher Wren — the letters so sharply defined they could've been carved yesterday. "You'd have thought he'd have known better," laughs English Heritage's Heather Sebire.

The sun streams triumphantly through the mist; a crow's call rings through the stones' amphitheatre. I've surely stepped into a cathedral. A temple; a place of ceremony and burial is Stonehenge's most-agreed-upon purpose, but its role is the speculation of centuries. It's become a sypher for human memory, a canvas for human need — variously, a druid church, an alien landing site, a funereal monument constructed by Merlin and a curative pilgrimage spot. The smaller 'bluestones' (said to possess healing properties) were somehow rolled, floated (magicked?) from a Welsh spiritual site. And it was constructed, according to recent assertions by author Robin Heath, using exact, albeit wildly pre-emptive, Pythagorean geometry. "I don't know about that," smiles Heather. "But they certainly knew what they were doing."

HOW TO DO IT: Tickets start at £19. *english-heritage.org.uk*

IMAGE: AWL IMAGES

Hot air balloons over Cappadocia

ANCIENT WONDERS

Cappadocia

Picture a landscape of fairytale turrets crafted from rock, with winding chimneys and hidden cave dwellings. Add in some bobbing hot air balloons and striking blue skies and you've got the otherworldly landscape of Cappadocia, a region in Turkey's Central Anatolia. These bizarre rock formations emanate a magnetic, magical vibe, but are very much the work of humans, who carved into the Goreme Valley a complex underground network of cave dwellings, places of worship, store houses and entire towns of honeycombed magnificence from around 1800 to 1200 BC. The valley was also home to Byzantine monastic communities, whose frescoes are still visible in cave chapels today. A hot air balloon ride above this fantastical region is a rite of passage for world travellers, while tours of Derinkuyu underground city, the Selime Monastery, and Goreme National Park will reveal the true wizardry and craftsmanship of Cappadocia's first settlers.

Pompeii

Brothels, loos, ornate bathing chambers, ruts in the road made by horse and carts, and election slogans daubed on walls: there's nowhere like Pompeii — the most-visited archaeological site in the world — to illustrate the colour of Roman life in the first century AD. Most famed for being the city 'frozen in time', when Vesuvius erupted in AD 79, the plaster casts of the victims buried by the ashes are a highlight of a Pompeii tour, as is the world's oldest surviving amphitheatre. *pompeiisites.org*

Alhambra

From the intricate carvings on the ceilings and panels of its Palace of the Lions to the Generalife gardens, fragrant with citrus and jasmine flowers, this ninth-century fortress complex in the Spanish city of Granada is a soul-lifting example of Moorish architecture at its most lyrical. Get there as early as you can, and ensure your ticket includes entry to the 14th-century Palacio Nazaríes — all floral tiled floors and tapering columns, it's the jewel in the Alhambra's crown. *alhambra.org*

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HIGH SOCIETY

As one of only two countries in the world where it's safe to go gorilla tracking, Rwanda is leading the way as a conservation powerhouse and ploughing the revenue from its permit fees back into its national parks

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS **EMMA GREGG**

Ben is having a bad hair day. He's the only mountain gorilla I've seen with a bald patch in the jet-black mop on his crown. It makes him look rather pitiful, like a Shakespearean anti-hero in a bad wig.

"He's had that since he was really young", says Edward Bahazi, our national park guide. "The Gorilla Doctors checked him out, and he's fine. It doesn't seem to bother him."

That's not the reason he's looking disheartened, then. The reason seems to be that the appealing young female Ben's been canoodling with in a cosy bower of nettles and native bamboo has suddenly had a change of heart. She's giving him the cold shoulder. And he's piqued.

What does a gorilla do when he's been humiliated in front of his companions? He takes it out on the nearest individual a rung or two down the social ladder. On this occasion, the obvious target is Paul. Only Paul isn't a gorilla. He's a member of our group.

Before I know it, 150kg of furry fury is barrelling past me, straight at Paul, who, startled out of his wits, tumbles backwards into a clump of nettles. Ego suitably boosted, Ben stalks off. Paul smiles gamely. No harm done, apart from a few stings and a bruised sense of composure. But I suspect he's jelly inside.

We're in Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, where mountain gorillas are the top attraction. Every trek begins with a detailed briefing, in which you're told that in the animals' presence you must keep seven metres away, and that if a gorilla approaches, to calmly back off. There are several reasons for this, not least that the spread of infectious disease is among the biggest threats to the survival of Africa's great apes. But gorillas don't always follow the rules.

The Sabyinyo group — the family I'm visiting — are the Kardashians of the park. All those photos you've seen of Rwandan gorillas on social media? Chances are, most of them are Sabyinyos. Their territory, in the foothills of Mount Sabyinyo, is relatively easy to reach on foot, so they receive daily visits from tourists. What's more, their leader, Guhonda, is every inch a megastar. Born in 1971, five years after primatologist Dian Fossey commenced her famous research project in these forests, he's Rwanda's oldest and largest silverback.

The national park has 10 habituated gorilla families; they've been taught by rangers, scouts and researchers to suppress their natural fear of humans and to allow people to approach. But the Sabyinyos are more fearless than most and when, as now, food is plentiful, they show off just how confident they are.

Guhonda leads his family over to a grassy clearing. By the time we catch up, playtime is in full swing. Small black bundles are rolling and wrestling, and one older youngster is

PREVIOUS PAGE: Sabyinyo mountain gorillas, Volcanoes National Park
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Guides ready for the trek; a store in Gisakura, near Nyungwe Forest National Park; Guhonda, the leader of the Sabyinyo group, watches over his family

The fee for a gorilla trek is £1,150 — that's enough to pay for multiple Champagne balloon safaris in Kenya or for a fistful of tickets to New York's Metropolitan Opera

running amok. "Ah-ah-ah-ah!" shouts Edward, his face like thunder, when the youngster dashes up to us with a crazed look in his eyes. "Somebody's been eating too many bamboo shoots today!" The best way to deal with a teenage gorilla on a sugar high, it seems, is to show it who's boss.

Thanks to their character and charisma, mountain gorillas have friends in high places. Every September, celebrities and philanthropists are invited to Volcanoes National Park for Kwita Izina, a naming ceremony for the previous year's newborns. Now in its 14th year, the week-long celebration has a strong focus on conservation and community development programmes — and the whole thing is quite a party. Power couple Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi have taken things a step further by funding a new research base for the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, one of Rwanda's most powerful engines of wildlife protection and research.

The fees paid by ordinary tourists help, too — ordinary, here, being a relative term. To maximise revenue while limiting the impact of tourism, the fee charged for a gorilla trek is an eye-watering US$1,500 (£1,150) per person. That's enough to pay for multiple Champagne balloon safaris in Kenya or for a fistful of top-price tickets to New York's Metropolitan Opera. Buy yourself an Arsenal season ticket instead and you'd have change for a couple of pints after every match.

"It's best not to think about the cost too literally," says Edward. "It's a contribution to the future of the park. By way of thanks, you get a special experience. I've taken thousands of people to see our gorillas and time after time they say it changed their life."

Conservation enthusiasts

Small, hilly and densely populated, Rwanda faces competition in the wildlife tourism stakes from the safari heartlands of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. But as one of only two countries in the world (along with Uganda) where it's safe to go on a mountain gorilla tracking excursion, it has enormous cachet — and as a conservation powerhouse, it has a few surprises up its sleeve.

I visit some of the sumptuous eco-lodges that cater for well-heeled, heli-hopping gorilla-watchers. Almost all are owned or managed by the well-respected big-name operators on the safari circuit, and all attract the kind of tourist dollars that breed more dollars in the form of donations and bequests.

Bisate Lodge stands out for its tree-planting programme and its pod-like rooms inspired by Rwanda's traditional royal palaces. With thatched roofs and curved walls, they remind me of weaverbird nests. Virunga Lodge has fabulous, far-reaching views and an inspiring new meeting space, the Dian Fossey Map Room, featuring shelves of books and portraits of explorers. Amakoro Songa Lodge, meanwhile, has a country house feel. Three more luxury pads — Singita Kwitonda Lodge, Singita Kataza House and One&Only Gorilla's Nest — are set to open this year.

They're aiming high, following the example set by Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge, which is owned by the Sabyinyo Community Livelihood Association (SACOLA) and backed by the African Wildlife Foundation. Unlike many community-owned lodges, it succeeds in making a healthy profit. "It's extraordinary," says Kenya-born general manager Philip Mason. "Thanks to the gorillas, this lodge has generated $3.25m (£2.48m) in 10 years for social housing, healthcare and schools. We're constantly booked up. Ellen DeGeneres and Leo Di Caprio have asked to stay here. We had to say no — we were full."

"In fact, Rwanda is extraordinary, full stop. I'm astounded at this country's ability to resolve deep-seated, complex

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Intore dance troupe at the Kwita Izina naming ceremony; hand-carved walking sticks; contemporary dance performance at Kwita Izina

problems through discussion and face-to-face reconciliation. I've never come across anything quite like it."

He's alluding, in part, to the healing process that followed the 1994 genocide, a national tragedy that still casts a long shadow. Rwanda, a country with little history of erecting public monuments and no native word for genocide — the term simply doesn't exist in the Kinyarwanda language — now has around a dozen major genocide memorials, which act as focal points for the 100-day period of mourning that's observed each year. But he's also referring to the country's success in rescuing mountain gorillas from the brink of extinction.

Rwanda's knack for attracting and harnessing big-spending conservation enthusiasts is definitely paying off. In Dian Fossey's time, fewer than 300 mountain gorillas remained, but thanks to her stubborn determination and lasting legacy, those numbers are recovering. Mountain gorillas are the only great apes in the world whose population is believed to be growing, and in 2018, their official status shifted from critically endangered to endangered.

With numbers up, there's a new problem to tackle. Over the years, plantations of eucalyptus and pyrethrum daisies, used to make insecticide, have nibbled away at the forests that cloak Rwanda's quintet of volcanoes, Karisimbi, Muhabura, Bisoke, Gahinga and Sabyinyo. When prime habitat is in limited supply, silverback gorillas sometimes stray into eucalyptus plantations or battle each other for territory, with infants getting killed in the crossfire. "We've noticed that gorilla groups are colliding more than they used to," says Tara Stoinski, Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund's chief scientific officer.

Happily, there's assistance in the pipeline. In one of Africa's most ambitious and significant reforestation initiatives, Volcanoes National Park is set to expand at a cost of more than $200 million (£154 million). The first steps are already underway: in 2018, the African Wildlife Foundation donated 27 hectares of land to the park. There's more to come in the form of a 3,740-hectare strip of farmland earmarked for rewilding. To ensure its protection, the land will be fringed by a 6,620-hectare buffer zone, tended to by locals, who will receive compensation including educational opportunities.

Elsewhere in Rwanda, wildlife projects are boosting the country's credentials as a nature destination. Lions and rhinos have been reintroduced into Akagera National Park, a swathe of grassy savannah and wetlands on the Tanzanian border; it can't match the Serengeti or the Maasai Mara for teeming herds and powerful prides, but it's refreshingly uncrowded. Its first truly luxurious safari stay, Magashi Camp, opened earlier this year.

Cathedral groves

In the southwest of the country, Nyungwe Forest National Park is even more alluring. It's Rwanda's most important area of biodiversity, home to 75 species of mammal (including 13 species of primates), 120 species of butterfly and 300 species of bird, as well as orchids, tree ferns and a number of endemic tree species. Driving along the smooth, Chinese-built highway that slices through the cathedral-like groves feels faintly sacrilegious, but it's worth it for the chance to relax at One&Only Nyungwe House, an elegant lodge anchored in a sea of emerald tea plants on the far fringes of the forest.

As we explore, we glimpse monkeys: wide-eyed L'Hoest's, bold Rwenzori colobus and curious grey-cheeked mangabeys, their fur frizzy with mist. Steep paths wind through mossy, epiphyte-draped trees to a canopy walkway from which, with pounding heart, I drink in the parrot's-eye view of the lush splendour.

Mountain gorillas are the only great apes in the world whose population is believed to be growing, and in 2018, their official status shifted from critically endangered to endangered

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Fawn-breasted waxbills, Gisakura Tea Estate; chimpanzee, Cyamudongo Forest; a chimpanzee-tracking excursion, Cyamudongo Forest

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A radical solution was introduced in 2008: Gishwati Forest was chosen to be the hub of a 30-mile reforestation zone leading to Nyungwe Forest National Park

Nyungwe Forest National Park has a small satellite, Cyamudongo Forest, which lies 10 miles southwest of One&Only Nyungwe House as the crow flies. Just 1.5sq miles in size, this scrap of montane rainforest is smaller than both New York's Central Park and London's Richmond Park. Despite being separated from the main forest by an undulating expanse of farmland, it's officially part of Nyungwe Forest National Park and is home to Rwanda's best chimpanzee trekking trails.

Cyamudongo Forest's two-dozen chimpanzees aren't the only ones isolated by human encroachment. Further north, in the highlands east of Lake Kivu, a smaller group has been clinging on for dear life in Gishwati Forest — the remnant of a once-mighty rainforest that connected with both the rainforests of the Congo and Nyungwe Forest.

In the 1980s, Gishwati Forest began to feel the pinch. As Rwanda's population expanded, villagers felled trees to make way for crops and livestock. In the 1990s, as civil war raged and waves of refugees resettled in the area, the situation quickly went from bad to worse. Within a decade, the Gishwati region was suffering from poor water quality and chronic soil erosion; landslides had become a regular occurrence, leaving thousands homeless and washing away tons of precious, highly fertile soil.

A radical solution, backed by American primatologists, was introduced in 2008: Gishwati Forest was chosen to be the hub of a 30-mile reforestation zone leading to Nyungwe Forest National Park, with a narrow six-mile corridor set to extend to Cyamudongo Forest. Inevitably, initial progress was slow, but the project's facilitators remained undaunted. On a previous visit to Rwanda, I'd met Madeleine Nyiratuza of the Forest of Hope Association, an NGO that launched eco-clubs aimed at introducing local schoolchildren to the natural treasures on their doorstep. "I want to see Gishwati looking like it was when I was a little girl", she'd told me, eagerly.

The Gishwati area is, mercifully, moving one giant step closer to recovery. Together with the smaller forest of Mukura, it was declared a national park in 2015 and, this year, the Gishwati-Mukura National Park is due to begin welcoming tourists; attractions include new hiking trails, mountain biking tracks and birdwatching spots. In time, this could be a great place to see chimps. For now, however, you're better off in Cyamudongo, where they're habituated and have a small enough range to make tracking straightforward.

ABOVE: Canopy walkway, Nyungwe Forest National Park

LEFT: A baby from the Sabyinyo mountain gorilla group eating bamboo shoots

The night before we go chimp-trekking, I'm determined to get plenty of rest. My huge four-poster bed is beckoning, but there's the small matter of tree hyraxes to cope with. These nocturnal mammals have a scream that would wake the dead. I close the French windows, hoping to keep out the racket.

Investing in sleep seems vital, as I've no idea how strenuous our excursion will be. This won't be my first visit to Cyamudongo Forest — my last trek here was as tough as an assault course. My companions, a group of ultra-fit 20-somethings from Canada, had been totally unfazed by the altitude; high with excitement, they'd raced like cougars along the steep paths while I, fresh in from a city that languishes at sea level, had puffed along in their wake. The chimps, when we'd finally spotted them, were way above us, in a tree at the top of a tangled bank; the scouts had had to hack through the vegetation with machetes, then haul everyone up for a glimpse.

Miraculously, I sleep through the hyrax chorus and rise, refreshed, to a misty dawn. Drifts of purple and flint-grey clouds hang above the treetops and the air is cool and loamy. It's a good sign. Driving away from Nyungwe Forest, we cross the Gisakura Tea Estate, where pickers are already plucking leaves and tossing them into the baskets on their backs. Further on, we wind through the scattered villages and fields of beans, eucalyptus and bananas that surround Cyamudongo Forest.

We're a little late, but our guide, Jean Claude Nyirimbabazi, is all smiles. "Don't worry", he says. "We're here to enjoy this very special forest. We're going to listen to its music. Like meditation. There's no need to hurry." Clearly, this trek is going to be nothing like last time.

After a short, gentle walk along dappled paths, we happen across the chimps. They're feasting in a fig tree loaded with ripe fruit. No wonder they were easy to find.

Skittering among them, tauntingly, is a troop of mona monkeys. In leaner times, they'd be dicing with danger; chimps occasionally use pack tactics to hunt monkeys, grabbing and devouring any easy-to-grasp youngsters. But these chimps, with their mouths stuffed full of figs and their eyes half-closed in bliss, barely give the monas a second glance.

Unlike the gorillas, they don't appear interested in us, either. But I'm perfectly OK with that. It's a privilege just to be in their orbit, occasionally meeting their casual, curious gaze. As we watch, the minutes melt away. And then, at an unheard signal, they scramble to the ground and are gone, their hoots echoing through the glorious trees.

ESSENTIALS

Getting there & around

RwandAir has three direct flights a week from Gatwick to Kigali. Kenya Airways flies daily between Heathrow and Kigali via Nairobi. Ethiopian Airlines flies daily between Heathrow and Kigali via Addis Ababa. *rwandair.com kenya-airways.com ethiopianairlines.com*

Average flight time: 8h40m.

Self-drive journeys are perfectly feasible, but distances are long. Alternatively, hire a driver/guide as part of a package or through a local operator such as Primate Safaris or Thousand Hills. *primatesafaris.info thousandhillsafrica.com*

When to go

Rwanda has a temperate climate, with average temperatures ranging between 16C and 27C year-round. In April and May, forest paths can be muddy.

Places mentioned

Amakoro Songa Lodge. *songaafrica.com*
Bisate Lodge and Magashi Camp. *wilderness-safaris.com*
One&Only Gorilla's Nest and One&Only Nyungwe House. *oneandonlyresorts.com*
Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge. *governorscamp.com*
Singita Kwitonda Lodge and Singita Kataza House. *rwanda.singita.com*
Virunga Lodge. *volcanoessafaris.com*

How to do it

RED SAVANNAH offers six nights visiting Nyungwe Forest, Volcanoes National Park and Lake Kivu, from £7,562 per person, full board, including gorilla and chimp trekking permits, land transport and return flights from London with RwandAir. *redsavannah.com*

NATURAL WORLD SAFARIS offers a five-day gorilla conservation safari, including time with the Gorilla Doctors, from £4,745 per person, and an 18-day Rwanda, Tanzania and Botswana trip from £12,520 per person. Both prices exclude international flights and gorilla permits. *naturalworldsafaris.com*

ILLUSTRATION: JOHN PLUMER

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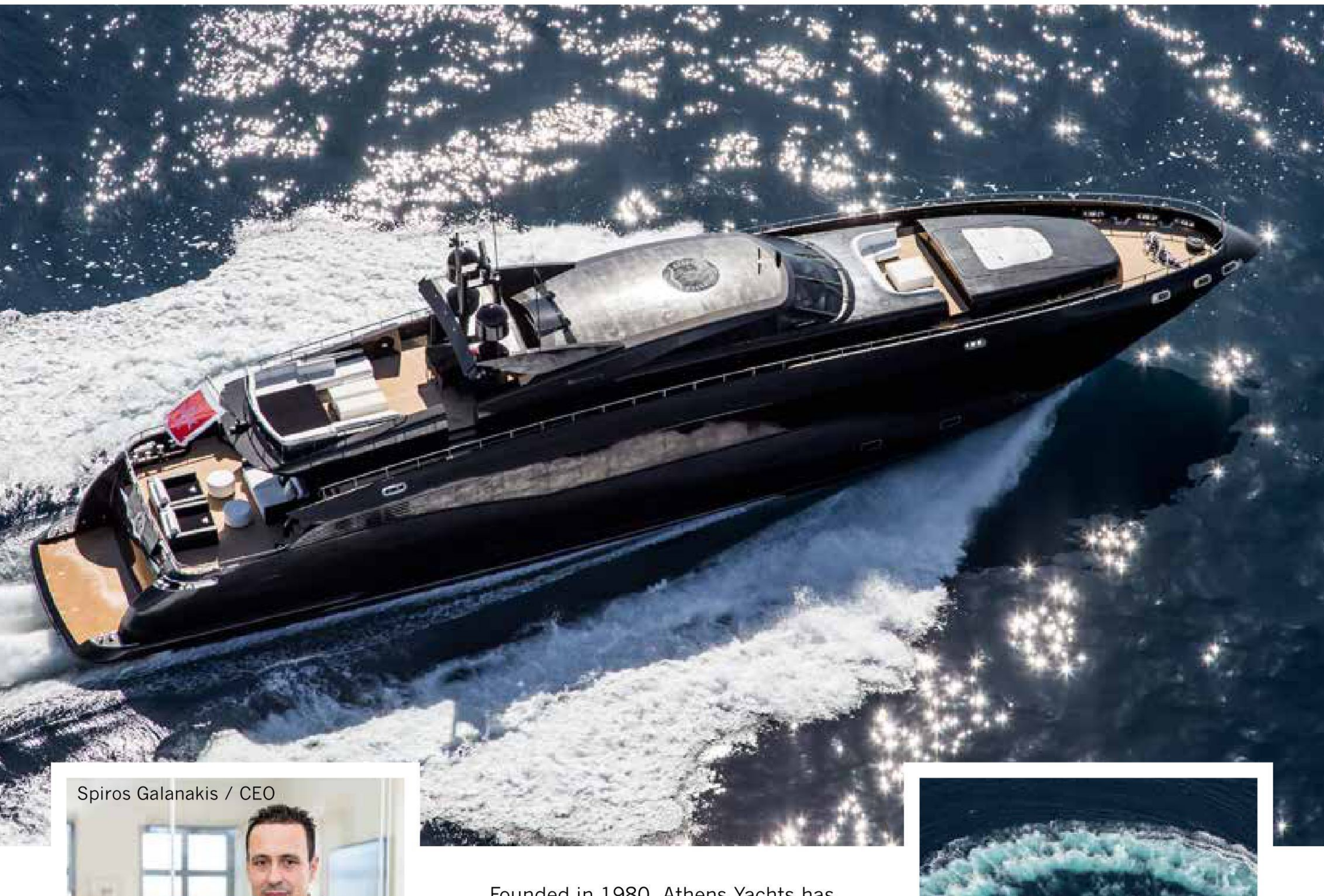

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THE MEANING

CROATIA'S COASTLINE SPARKLES IN SUMMER, BUT THE DALMATIAN HINTERLAND, ZAGORA, OFFERS SOMETHING SUBTLER. HERE YOU CAN LOSE YOURSELF AMID A LANDSCAPE OF WATERFALLS AND WILDERNESS

WORDS
PÓL Ó CONGHAILE

PHOTOGRAPHS
SLAWEK KOZDRAS

OF POMALO

Sunset turns the dimmer switch on the village of Radonić. It's that soft, glowing hour of the day, when the light loses its glare and the heat its harshness. A honey-like hue is settling on the stone buildings of the Kalpić farm where, inside, three generations are settling down to an evening feast of *peka* — meat, slow-cooked in the traditional, Dalmatian way, under the 'bell' of a lid covered in embers.

It's mid-March, and the tourist season has yet to begin in earnest. Wine is flowing. Ruby-red shards of *pršut* (dry-cured, prosciutto-style ham) are being plucked from a platter and eaten with cheese and bread. Conversation pinballs around, and briefly turns to which of life's decades is the most enjoyable.

"They say the 60s are the best," announces Ivana Kalpić, nodding to her parents. Her dad is spooning out slow-cooked chicken and veal from the *peka*; her mum bouncing a granddaughter on her knee as she offers a glass of wine to clink against my own. "We say the 20s," Ivana adds, looking at her sister, Anita. "But now we're in our 30s," she smiles. "Everything moves so fast."

Mr Kalpić was born here, I learn, and began steering the farm towards tourism after the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Croatian War of Independence in the 1990s. Over the years, it's passed to his daughters, Ivana and Anita, and today the rustic estate hosts a B&B, apartments and a gastronomic offering based around their own cheese, ham, olive oils, bread, vegetables and wine.

It took me less than 45 minutes to drive to Agrotourism Kalpić, as it's now called, from the Dalmatian coast — meandering through a tiny village where my wing mirrors narrowly avoided dry stone walls. But it feels like a different country.

"It was old-school. We had wooden signs on the road," Ivana laughs, remembering the early days when their small business took root in a post-war landscape.

I've come to Šibenik-Knin County, a stretch of Central Dalmatia north of Split and south of Zadar, with a simple mission in mind: to try and get a feel for the Dalmatian hinterland or Zagora (literally, 'behind the hills') — southern Croatia's relatively unexplored inland region. I'm basing myself in Šibenik, whose gorgeous old town overlooks the point where the River Krka kisses the Adriatic. It's far enough north of Dubrovnik to avoid the early season crowds and, using the city as a launch point, my plan is to make daily excursions inland, winding past road signs that warn of wild boars, through karstic limestone landscapes whose gnarly stone walls and sprouts of greenery remind me at times of the west of Ireland, at others of Spain's Sierra Nevada. This way I can inject myself into off-radar places like Radonić or Knin — the place where I first hear the word '*pomalo*'.

"It means, 'take it easy, go slowly, relax'," says Romana Marković, explaining the Dalmatian term. Working with the Knin tourist office, she shows me the local sights, from the town's hulking fortress to its pummelling Krčić waterfall, just three miles from the centre. At first, I take the word as a stereotypical waving away of urgency — like '*mañana*' in Spain, or '*halara*' in Greece. But it soon becomes obvious it's both more than that, and harder to define. In these parts, Romana tells me, *pomalo* can be a greeting, a philosophy, even a state of mind. "Of course, sometimes it's a bit irritating," she says. "But in most cases you end up feeling better."

Knin is around a half-hour drive from the Bosnian border, and Croatia's highest peak — the 6,276ft Dinara — is clearly visible in the distance. It feels remote, but Knin Fortress, with layers of history dating back more than 1,000 years, reminds me of the busy comings and goings in Croatia over the centuries. Positioned between the Balkans and Central Europe, you'll find everything from Slavic churches to Ottoman and Napoleonic forts dotted about the place.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Wooden bridge, Krka National Park
FROM LEFT: Ivana and Anita Kalpić; rooftops and sea, Šibenik

A series of steps leads from the top of a canyon down to extraordinary views over the River Krka and Roški slap, a cascade of waterfalls flicking out silver flashes of colour

In fact, the first thing I see over the entrance to the fortress is a carving of a winged Venetian lion. There have been modern conflicts too, of course. On 5 August 1995, after Croatia was liberated following 'Operation Storm', the national flag was erected on this hilltop.

Raw nature

From Knin, Romana and I drive south towards Cetina, seeking out its deep, clear-water spring and Church of Holy Salvation — its graveyard dotted with chunky medieval tombstones, known as *stećci*. Since it's low season, most of the buildings we pass seem desolate and abandoned. Blossoms wave in the breeze next to crumbling walls, empty outbuildings, farmhouses without windows. The silence, framed by Dinara and a widescreen blue sky, make the post-war landscape feel doubly surreal.

"Raw nature," says Romana, several times, evoking the mountains, lakes, and rivers around us. "This part is really forgotten."

I wonder what it's like to live here. Romana moved from Zagreb several months ago, she tells me. Understandably, it took her some time to adapt to the change of pace. But now she sees the potential for *pomalo* tourism. People here are good hosts she says, "because they don't try to be something they're not".

As the crow flies, Cetina is less than 45 miles from the coast. But it feels further than that. Coastal Dalmatia has its own palette: jewel-blue seas, marmalade-orange rooftops and swishing green pines. The hinterland, however, adds broody browns, mountain greys and rusty travertines. Beyond the seaside holiday resorts, the roads grow quieter. Coast and hinterland feel at once connected and removed.

I say goodbye to Romana in Knin, continuing to nearby Krka National Park, where I set off on foot. A series of 517 steps leads from the top of a canyon down to extraordinary views over the River Krka and Roški slap, a cascading string of waterfalls flicking out silver flashes of colour.

"We call them necklaces," my guide, Stjepan Gundić, tells me. Limestone walls rise either side of us in a national park that follows the water from the early Croatian fortresses of Trošenj and Nečven towards the coast at Šibenik. I hear about a new wave of activities springing up among the scenic beauty spots and twisting canyon drives — zip-lines, cycling and winding hiking trails are just the beginning.

Navigating the hairpin bends, I stop several times to take photos; of the yellow railings lining the bridge across the river near Roški slap, say, or the beautiful Visovac Monastery on its tiny island, so often seen in travel brochures. There are the husks of old mills, and another waterfall, Skradinski Buk, reached from Skradin by boat or bike.

My favourite view, however, is too small and dark for pictures. Oziđana pećina is a cave in the stone, high above Roški slap, that once sheltered Neolithic people. Venturing about 150ft in, my guide and I come within a hair's breadth of a little brown bat, hanging from the rock. It doesn't budge.

"Everything here is the story of water and karst," I'm told later by Josipa Čupić. She's the director of the local tourist office in Drniš, a small town famous for its *pršut* and as the birthplace of sculptor Ivan Meštrović. "You have landscapes that can feel raw and unfriendly, but then you have these fantastic oases and rivers, surprises like Meštrović, and the whole way of life. Some come [to Croatia] for the seaside. Those who come to the hinterland are more curious."

Over in Skradin, a riverside town serving as the gateway to Krka National Park, yacht masts chatter in a spring wind. I sit down to a mix of freshly fried shrimp and tiny fish from the brackish waters where the river and sea meet. Also on the menu is a local speciality, *Skradinska torta*, a cake made with ground almonds and walnuts instead of flour. I've heard Dalmatia's lifestyle is 'slower' than that in Croatia generally, but the owner of Zlatne školjke ('Golden Shells') restaurant clearly doesn't think I've got the message yet.

PREVIOUS PAGES: Roški slap, Krka National Park
FROM LEFT: Wooden steps, Krka National Park; Šibenik

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Celebrating culture inside the stone walls

The iconic city walls have safeguarded Dubrovnik for centuries, and have allowed the city's rich cultural history to thrive and grow. A veritable cornucopia of landmarks have stood the test of time and today are testament to Dubrovnik's proud history. But it isn't only the stone facades that have been protected, the soul of the city beats to the sound of culture. And this year the jewel in the crown of Croatia's cultural calendar, the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, celebrates its 70th anniversary. It will, of course, be celebrated in style with an impressive line-up for this summer.

I stop for a tour of the pretty town of Primošten — dangled like a little teardrop into the sea — and the medieval centre of Šibenik

ABOVE: Primošten

She runs her eye over my hectic schedule. "Too much tempo," she says, chiding me.

Blown on the wind

I couldn't come to this part of the world without at least skimming the coast, but after having Zagora largely to myself, I'm not willing to immerse myself in the crowds of Dubrovnik. Instead I stop for a tour of the pretty town of Primošten — dangled like a little teardrop into the sea — and the medieval centre of Šibenik, a Dalmatian beauty not yet touched by tourism to the same extent as Zadar or Split.

It's not until I reach the old town of Šibenik that I discover its charms. Trickling down towards the startlingly blue Adriatic, Šibenik and its islands throw up some gorgeous views. Cool, cobbled alleyways fend off the sun, threading through the town and every now and then revealing a surprise — the monastery garden of St Lawrence, or little stores selling Dalmatian olive oils and red Babić wines, squares with colourful window shutters and shaded seats, or the panoramas from St Michael's Fortress.

Its showpiece, however, is the Cathedral of St James, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that's attracted awe through the ages — most recently as a location for Braavos in *Game of Thrones*. Yet there's an equally weird and wonderful cast of characters in the 71 sculpted heads peering down on passers-by from its exterior walls. They look like Renaissance caricatures, but in fact, guide Mia Deković tells me, were based on 15th-century citizens. "Like Facebook profiles from back in the day," she smiles.

Mia lives in Šibenik, and I ask her what distinguishes it from the relentless draw of Dubrovnik. "It was the first city founded by Croats," she tells me. "The Romans and Greeks never came here." She describes it as a place that drifts gently between the seasons; spring is spent in flower-filled gardens, while summer is a time of open-air concerts.

Winter brings the region's *bura* — an infamous wind that blows across the hinterland from mountains to sea (mention it to any Dalmatian and watch the expression on their face change). The strong, clean and often bone-chilling wind — which stretches into spring — has its upsides, however, not least, the air-drying of the sweet *pršut*. You'll find the ham hanging throughout Šibenik-Knin County (Elizabeth II ate *Drniški pršut* at her coronation ceremony in 1953, several people tell me). If the *bura* blows three times in March, it's said that summer will be hot and stable, and

Boat trip, Krka National Park

it's during one of these three breezy periods that I meet Joško Lokas, the larger-than-life owner of Etnoland Dalmati, a small, open-air living history museum at Pakovo Selo, a village near Krka National Park.

"You probably remember the time before Instagram," Joško laughs, greeting me in a traditional costume and cap, before offering a tour of his site. "There were also times before tourism in the Dalmatian coast."

The *bura* seems to reach inside my coat, laying its cold hands on my skin, so we expedite the introductions and head into an outbuilding where Joško begins a journey through Dalmatian heritage via reconstructed kitchens, hearths, bedrooms and cellars. I learn how *peka* was cooked in the embers, how *pršut* was smoked over open fireplaces, how locals danced in milling circles, and how *konobas*, the casual restaurants now common throughout Dalmatia, began life as literal 'cellars' on home and farmsteads, where families stored various goods. "People who came to Croatia in the 1960s still remember these scenes," Joško tells me, evoking a time when intrepid tourists found prices chalked onto *konoba* doors in the countryside.

These sorts of visitor attractions aren't usually my cup of tea, but I'm won over by Joško's boundless enthusiasm and fascinating personal story. His grandfather grew up on this very homestead, he explains; and now he and his wife have rebooted it as a place to share the under-told story of Croatia's rural heritage.

Afterwards, we sit in his large dining hall eating ham, cheese and *peka*, talking about his wish to tempt tourists away — however briefly — from the loungers of the coast. "We're talking about the hidden things that you don't know," he says.

The family feel here reminds me of my time at Agrotourism Kalpić. "It's still *netaknut* — untouched," Ivana had said of the hinterland. There, as the kids swiped strips of *pršut* from a big plate, she'd shown me the *peka* stewing away in her shed. Her husband had brushed the embers off the lid, lifting it to let a magical little puff of smoke out, revealing the cuts of veal, chicken and pork cooking ever so slowly within. "You need to get the taste of the wood, smoke and time coming through," she mused. "If you don't have that, it tastes fake."

I may not have known what *pomalo* meant then, but after a few days travelling from sparkling coast to intriguing interior, dipping in and out of Zagora, I've got a little dose of it to take home.

ESSENTIALS

Getting there & around

British Airways flies to Split from Heathrow and London City, Croatian Airlines from Heathrow and Gatwick, and EasyJet, Jet2.com and Norwegian from various UK airports. Ryanair, EasyJet and Norwegian all fly to Zadar. Both cities are around an hour by car from Šibenik. *ba.com croatiaairlines.com ryanair.com easyjet.com jet2.com norwegian.com*
Average flight time: 2h45m.
Driving is straightforward in this part of Croatia — though certainly easier outside of peak summer season, with less traffic on the roads. Watch out for relatively low speed limits (90km/h or 55mph outside settled areas) and have a parking plan before you enter busy towns, particularly at the coast.

When to go

Shoulder season is the time to visit southern Croatia and the Dalmatian Hinterland. May, June, September and October see fewer crowds near coastal areas, and the sting goes from the peak summer temperatures (mid-30Cs). September sees the Adriatic at its warmest, too.

Where to stay

Heritage Hotel Life Palace, Šibenik. *hotel-lifepalace.hr*

Places mentioned

Agrotourism Kapic. *kalpic.com*
Knin Fortress & waterfall. *visitknin.eu*
Krka National Park. *np-krka.hr*
Skradin. *skradin.hr*
Etnoland Dalmati. *dalmati.com*

More info

croatia.hr
dalmatiasibenik.hr
sibenik-tourism.hr

How to do it

UNFORGETTABLE CROATIA has a week at the Heritage Hotel Life Palace in Šibenik, including flights to Split as well as car hire, from £995pp. *unforgettablecroatia.co.uk*

ILLUSTRATION: JOHN PLUMER

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Jordan

The nomadic Bedouins have roamed Jordan's valleys, mountains and deserts for centuries. In these harsh landscapes, warm hospitality, and communion with the land are cultural hallmarks — all rooted in the practical wisdom of desert survival

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS **YULIA DENISYUK**

The desert calls

Many travellers come to Jordan in search of its remarkable ancient and cultural heritage, best admired at sites such as Petra or Madaba. Straying into the countryside, however, where deserts are red and rugged beneath the Levantine sun, offers a glimpse into the local way of life. Having roamed this land for centuries, Bedouins make excellent guides — offering travellers an opportunity to explore a landscape that's shaped an entire culture.

The way of the desert

Southern Jordan is home to Wadi Rum, a Mars-red desert of vast sandstone formations that rise from the sand like the humps of a camel. Tribes have lived in this stark land for generations, and are renowned for their accommodating hospitality. Guests can stay for up to three days with no questions asked — only on the fourth day is the host allowed to inquire about the visitor's name and their intentions.

Three cups of coffee

Despite Wadi Rum's hostile environment, the desert is home to more than 100 species of plant, including sage, which is used to make strong tea. But it's coffee that forms the foundation of Bedouin hospitality — no casual visit, marriage negotiation or conflict resolution happens without it. Three cups are served in a row: one for the guest, honouring their arrival; one for the sword, honouring bravery; and one for the soul, celebrating good spirit.

The original nomads

Bedouin tribes are thought to have come to Jordan from the Arabian Peninsula as early as the 14th century. For hundreds of years, they've wandered the lands between what's now Iraq and Saudi Arabia, herding camels and goats through the desert. Over time, modernisation has slowly crept in; today, most Bedouins are no longer fully nomadic and live in houses in towns and villages. However, many maintain a traditional tent so they can still move around with the seasons in search of better grazing.

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UBUD

Ubud is Indonesia's cultural capital, home to beautiful temples, galleries and architecture. Wander through the colourful streets and open-air markets, taking in performances of traditional Balinese dance. Be sure to out the Agung Rai Musuem of Art for its collection of traditional artwork.

KOMODO NATIONAL PARK

Set off on a thrilling tour of Komodo Island with an experienced ranger in search of the elusive Komodo dragon — the largest lizard in the world. Afterwards, snorkel in the clear blue waters of Pink Beach, then take a trip to Rinca Island for another 'dragon' trek.

IMAGES: GETTY

MOUNT BROMO

Set off for an early-morning climb up Mount Bromo, Indonesia's iconic active volcano. Ride a pony up the slopes of Mount Tregger, then cross a sea of sand before climbing the 245 steps to the crater rim, arriving just in time for sunrise. The views of the sun bathing the dramatic landscape below are spectacular.

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Roam the coves and hills of Senggigi on Lombok island, soaking up the views of jungle-strewn mountains. Relax on the beach, try your hand at sailing, surfing or kayaking, or opt for a forest trek, cookery class or massage. Plus, take a trip to the mountain village of Sembalu.

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JOURNEY INTO THE DOLOMITES

Here's why you should be planning to conquer the formidable *Dolomiti senza Confini* — the 'Dolomites without Borders' mountain trail

The brooding peaks of the Italian Dolomites draw thousands of adventurous souls. But climbers have had their heads turned by a new trail, borne out of an idea to unite mountainscapes that were once the sites of bitter border disputes. The 67-mile route winds along military trails, taking in 12 via ferrata, 17 mountain refuges and two countries — that's a couple of ticks off your travel tick-list in one hit. Here, we spotlight the trail's nine stages...

STAGE ONE

Berti to **Rifugio Carducci**

This is no walk in the park, but the payoff is a spectacular trek through wild, remote terrain and eye-popping views of Monte Giralba di Sotto. Climbing via ferrata Roghel and Cengia Gabriella takes skill, patience and buckets of strength.
Distance: 4.5 miles **Difficulty:** Hard

STAGE TWO

Rifugio Carducci to **Three Peaks**

Things mellow out a little near the new via ferrata Croda dei Toni, which links Rifugio Carducci with Bivacco de Toni. Those with a head for heights will enjoy the suspension bridges at the start and end of the path.
Distance: 10.4 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate

STAGE THREE

Three Peaks to **Rifugio Comici**

This moderately tricky section weaves along the Three Peaks with steep, sharp ascents that'll take your breath away. Here, you can retrace the steps of WW1 soldiers through a time-worn tunnel.
Distance: 5 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate

STAGE FOUR

Rifugio Comici to **Rifugio Rudi**

Take time to soak up those views of endless skies, mountains and glassy pools. The path you'll follow — Strada degli Alpini — is one of the Dolomites' most famous, carved into the rock face by Alpini soldiers during WW1.
Distance: 5.5 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate

Clockwise from left: Suspension bridge on new via ferrata Croda dei Toni; the Three Peaks in the Sesto Dolomites; Monte Cavallino

STAGE FIVE

Rifugio Rudi to **Rifugio Berti**

Prepare to challenge your calf muscles as you ascend Croda Rossa (9,633 ft), a route that's a steely climb even for the pros. Once you've conquered the challenging climb, an evocative descent awaits along wartime-era paths — this is spine-tingling Italian history come to life.
Distance: 5.2 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate

STAGE SIX

Rifugio Berti to **Obstanserseehütte**

This is the easiest section of the route, with no via ferrata and an abundance of natural beauty: shady forest paths leading to Monte Quaternà, meadows of wildflowers and backdrops of the South Tyrolean Dolomites.
Distance: 10.1 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate

STAGE SEVEN

Obstanserseehütte to **Neue Porzehütte**

You'll need to refuel before taking on the demanding Ferrata del Monte Cavallino. Parts of the trail are shaded along these parts, and snow can linger here until July. Once you pull yourself up from the top rung, you'll be rewarded with a spectacular view of the Europe Cross, decorated with Austrian and Italian flags.
Distance: 7.8 miles **Difficulty:** Hard

IMAGES: NICOLA BOMBASSEI; MANFRED KOSTNER; MORENO GEREMETTA

STAGE EIGHT

Neue Porzehütte to **Filmoor** to **Standschützenhütte**

On this stretch you'll mostly be trekking the Carnic trail, which follows the border of Italy and Austria. As you conquer via Ferrata del Camoscio and Corrado D'Ambros, soak up the pure Alpine views.
Distance: 4.7 miles **Difficulty:** Moderate

STAGE NINE

Filmoor to **Standschützenhütte** to **Rifugio Lunelli**

This should only be tackled by those with complex technical ability. The air up here in this tranquil eden is fresh, fragrant and sure to leave a spring in your step.
Distance: 12.7 miles **Difficulty:** Hard

Essentials

Getting there: The route can be accessed from several points in East Tyrol, Sesto and Belluno. When flying from the UK, it's best to land in Innsbruck, Austria, or Verona, Italy and head from there.

To find out more, visit *dolomitisenzaconfini.eu*

Larusmiani store, Milan

City life

MILAN

An intimate connection with fashion is woven into the fabric of Milanese culture, from innovative galleries to designer boutiques reimagining former industrial buildings

WORDS: *Julia Buckley* **PHOTOGRAPHS:** *Diana Franceschin*

On the first floor of the Poldi Pezzoli museum in Milan's Quadrilatero d'Oro — the city's 'Golden Rectangle of Fashion' — a young woman looks towards the window. She has her profile to me: eyelashes curled, cheeks just rosy enough that I can't tell if it's blusher or a youthful glow, retroussé nose pointed towards the sun as she gazes into the distance. Her dress — red sleeves on a green bodice — exemplifies what the Milanese do best: fashion-forward but discreet. Her blonde hair, done up in an elaborate bun enveloped in gauzy silk, is dotted with pearls to match the ones around her throat. I can't stop staring.

"We don't know her name," says Fedra Pavesi, my guide. Posed as perfectly as an Instagram queen, this fashionista was painted by Piero del Pollaiolo in the 15th century. "The woman isn't the subject," Fedra explains. "This painting shows the richness of her family."

Fedra's not any old guide; she works for Milanese 'cultural journey designers' Elesta Travel. The company avoids places with big queues, like Leonardo's Last Supper, or the Duomo, with its crowds scuttling, ant-like, across the roof, dwarfed by the fourth largest church in the world. Instead, the company designs tours around the interests of its well-heeled clientele, each as precisely tailored as the made-to-measure suits of the Quadrilatero. I want a taste of Milanese fashion, I'd told them. So here we are, at the Poldi Pezzoli, learning how high-end threads have always been part of the culture here; and how past and present intertwine in Milan's fashion scene today.

This, says Fedra, is what the Milanese consider to be 'their' museum. Throughout the years, wealthy locals have donated their collections to the institution. These include founder Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli; Bruno Falck, a 20th-century industrialist who collected gold clocks (which were a men's fashion accessory centuries back); and numerous families who've bestowed jewellery, including an Etruscan brooch, gold Lombard hoop earrings and an 18th-century ring in the shape of a Venetian mask, which opens to reveal a red heart. The museum's Armoury section, laid out by Milan-based sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro, looks like a theatre set, with a ghoulish, helmeted army squaring off against disembodied swords rising from the ground. Only in Milan could a weapon collection look so stylish.

Europe's fashion capital has always favoured discreet luxury over more boundary-pushing styles. As I walk around the Quadrilatero — centred around Via Monte Napoleone, where every doorway I pass seems to belong to yet another designer brand — I'm taken aback by how normal-looking it all is. That is, until I step inside. Larusmiani has a 1970 Lamborghini Miura sitting alongside the rails of men's clothing; Buccellati's glittering jewels include a 'black gold' cuff, on sale for a cool €34,000 (£29,500). Bottega Veneta, meanwhile, has

a fountain by the shoe display and a glass wall overlooking a garden so bucolic that for a moment I forget I'm in Milan. And on neighbouring Via Borgospesso, the flagship Bottega Veneta Home store displays its signature plaited-leather armchairs between walls opulently frescoed by 18th-century artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo.

"I love that expression," grins showroom worker Katherine Peña, as my jaw drops when I walk in. "Until 10 years ago, we were thought of as an ugly city, but now we're being seen as a cultural place and a real destination — not just somewhere you come to shop. But you need to discover Milan to see it."

She's right — this isn't a city that puts everything on display. It's one that makes you scratch beneath the surface, invites you to peek through that open doorway into a flower-filled 18th-century courtyard, to cross that disused railway track to find a world-class gallery, to ring the bell at a nondescript apartment block and be buzzed into the workshop of the Merzaghi family, jewellers to the Milanese elite since 1870.

The first Merzaghi to turn his hand to jewellery, great-grandfather Rino, worked on a tiara for Pope Pius XI. Today, father and son, Marco and Mauro, use Rino's tools to handcraft similarly exquisite pieces, some of which are based on his original designs. For others, they start from scratch; often, clients bring in family heirlooms that need reworking to 21st-century tastes. What binds them together is that same Milanese discretion. "It's the kind of thing you can show when you want," says Mauro's sister, Paola, brandishing a bracelet shimmering with diamonds. "But you can also cover it easily," she says, pulling her shirt cuff over it. In Milan, one never shows off.

And in Milan, the artistic riches are often shared. Back in the Renaissance, Fedra tells me, the leading artists of the day were often hired to decorate churches. Today, the elite create their own art galleries, often helping to regenerate rundown areas in the process.

CULTURE & FASHION BECOME ONE

In the northern suburbs is the Pirelli HangarBicocca, a former train factory repurposed by the Pirelli tyre company as a modern art space. In the south east is the Fondazione Prada: a one-time distillery renovated by Rem Koolhaas and filled with Miuccia Prada's collection of modern art.

There are temporary exhibitions in the main complex, while Torre — a stark, white, upended shoebox of a building opened last year — contains works by artists Miuccia has sponsored, a scenario that would have been familiar to her Renaissance forebears. Here, fly-filled cubes by Damien Hirst square off against Carsten Höller's giant, upside-down, spinning toadstools; bright metallic 'tulips' by Jeff Koons look out through floor-to-ceiling windows across derelict train tracks to the distant gothic spires of the Duomo.

Giorgio Armani, fashion designer *//*
"Milan is strong and fearless but welcoming, too. Little by little, I came to realise I could become someone here"

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Duomo di Milano; Poldi Pezzoli museum; Larusmiani store; portrait of a Young Lady, by Piero del Pollaiolo, Poldi Pezzoli museum

SLOW
DOWN
PRINT
SUN
SHINE
NO
NEW

NEW ART
PROOF

Sky high *// The Duomo is Italy's largest church and took 600 years to build. Take the lift to the top and you can walk between flying buttresses and across the roof*

INSIDER TIPS

For an in-depth look at Milan style, turn to tailored guidebooks *The Monocle Travel Guide, Milan* (RRP: £15) and *The 500 Hidden Secrets of Milan* (Luster, RRP: £14.95).

Via Tortona, near the laidback nightlife area of Navigli, is becoming known for its boutique and pop-up design outlets.

Tickets to visit Leonardo's Last Supper at the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie need to be booked months in advance. *turismo.milano.it*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Luca Mariani, Fratelli Bonvini Milano; Duomo Di Milano; letterpress blocks, Fratelli Bonvini Milano; Fondazione Prada

Prada's other gallery is the Osservatorio Prada, based in the 19th-century Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II — the mall to end all malls, with its designer brands overwhelmed by the frothy terrazzo flooring, belle époque palazzos and vaulted glass roofs.

When I pop into Café Trussardi, one of many bars run by a fashion brand, I find myself sandwiched between a woman in leopard-print leggings and impeccably dressed couples. "Are you going to the opera, madam?" asks bar manager Luigi. "We'll speed up if you are." As I drink my Trussardi-brand Prosecco, half the clientele drift off in their glad rags to La Scala next door.

Tradition, elegance, giving back: turns out Milan isn't half as elitist as I'd thought. And now there's a new generation coming through, wanting to turn the design scene on its head. Far away from the galleries of Brera and Via Tortona, the two self-styled design districts, on the nondescript Via Torino, is Art Mall Milano, which opened in April. Previously a grimy subterranean nightclub, it's now a bar stuffed with super-cool modern art, and everything's for sale, right down to the chairs.

It's aperitivo time, and my glass of wine arrives with a platter of pata negra ham (softer and nuttier than prosciutto), salami, lardo, bruschetta and two types of cheese. The art on the walls tonight (the exhibits are overhauled each month) is a bit too cool for me, but I'm taken with a stool made from the base of a typographer's chair from a historic Milanese design agency, topped with a Vespa saddle. Ten minutes later — after the bar's co-owner (and creator of the stool) has lovingly explained its history — it's mine. He even gives me a hefty discount because, he says, I "get" how his work honours the past.

He's not the only one to do so. At Fratelli Bonvini Milano, near Fondazione Prada, Roberto di Puma is one of six 'associates' from the world of high design who've pulled together to save a stationery and typography shop. Opened in 1909 by the Bonvini family, it closed in 2013 and was set to be destroyed.

The shop sells everything from top-drawer fountain pens and vintage Olivetti typewriters to handmade Italian stationery and small-press books. Round the back is the printing press, where they still use the original machines. The drawers are full of old lettering and typesetting paraphernalia — the only thing they've added is electricity.

The associates were keen to keep a dying tradition alive, providing work for machine menders and, along with Fondazione Prada, regenerating the post-industrial area by encouraging locals to get involved and holding workshops for schoolkids.

Last year, an upstairs opened; already, Carlo Stanga, a well-known Milanese architect and illustrator, has exhibited there. It's modern Milan through and through: classy, traditional yet open to all. You can thank the likes of Poldi Pezzoli for that.

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★★★★★

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★★★★★

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★★★★★

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The Doping Club

Q&A: Andrea Tripodo, luxury brand manager

HOW HAS MILAN CHANGED IN THE PAST 10 YEARS?
It's almost unrecognisable. Milan has always been known as Italy's most international city, but in the past few years the acceleration has been very noticeable. The new skyline at Porta Garibaldi [a district with many modern high-rises, including the Vertical Forest] is an example of Italian style that's redrawn the city's profile.

HOW DOES NEW TALENT GET DISCOVERED?
Young people come here to study from all over the world, and brands take the best talent from the colleges — very early on they work out their ability to take Italian style forward.

WHY HAVE FASHION BRANDS OPENED BARS?
These days, luxury brands want to offer a total style of living. Fantastic architects have made magnificent bars that interpret the taste of each fashion house. Armani, Bulgari, Dolce & Gabbana — all want to diversify. Their clientele is demanding, respects the style of the brand and isn't put off by high prices, because it gives the feeling of somehow belonging to the brand.

WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT VIA MONTE NAPOLEONE?
It's the densest concentration of the 'made in Italy' brand, the highest expression of Italy's savoir faire. Everyone wants to say: 'I'm shopping in Montenapo'. Global brands jostle to get their window space in Monte Napoleone — they have to be present. If you're not there, you're worth nothing.

Milan's top DESIGN DENS

THE DOPING CLUB

BEST FOR: A NIGHT IN THE KNOW

Dress up, be nice and put your phone away to gain entry to the bar of choice for Milan's design crowd. It's part of The Yard Hotel but feels anything like a hotel bar, with a huge, traditional, English-style main room filled with mismatched chesterfields and a mini *Titanic* replica. The cocktails are inventive, there's fantastic pizza, the soundtrack is jazz, and the strict no-phone policy means people actually talk to each other. *thedopingclub.com*

TRIENNALE

BEST FOR: VIEWS

The 22nd International Exhibition (until 1 September) at La Triennale di Milano in Sempione Park focuses on eco-friendly design. The rooftop Terrazza Triennale restaurant and bar overlooks the park and the Sforza Castle, which contains ceiling frescoes by da Vinci and views of the Duomo and the Vertical Forest (twin high-rise apartment blocks covered in plants). *triennale.org osteriaconvista.it*

CIRCOLO MARRAS

BEST FOR: FASHION

Ring the bell for Circolo Marras at this nondescript block of flats and you'll be buzzed into a beautiful, tree- and flower-filled garden — seats tucked away in nooks, rusting bird cages hung artily on creeper-covered walls. Beyond this lies Antonio Marras' shop, where you'll find his latest clothing collection, along with a ceramics collaboration with Puglia-based Kiasmo, and homewear including sofas dressed in his fabrics. *antoniomarras.com*

10 CORSO COMO

BEST FOR: A MORNING OUT

Opened in 1990 as a gallery by fashion editor Carla Sozzani in a vacant garage in trendy Porta Garibaldi, 10 Corso Como has since expanded to include a fashion boutique, a cafe and a bookshop, all wrapped around a florid garden with a pretty terrace on top. Weird and wonderful design elements, including life-size giraffes propping up the chandeliers attract the Instagrammers. *10corsocomo.com*

Remains, by Sheela Gowda, Pirelli HangarBicocca

PIRELLI HANGARBICOCCA

BEST FOR: GRANDEUR

German artist Anselm Kiefer's Seven Celestial Palaces (huge, precarious-looking concrete towers) dominates this industrial plant-turned-modern art exhibition space in the Bicocca district. Temporary shows include Indian artist Sheela Gowda's Remains (until 15 September), featuring ominous crimson bunting. The dynamic between the exhibits and the vast space they occupy is extraordinary.

MONTENAPOLEONE VIP LOUNGE

BEST FOR: HIGH ROLLERS

Via Monte Napoleone's big spenders are gifted free entrance to this exclusive rooftop lounge by brands wanting to curry favour; mere mortals can buy access for €195 (£169). That gets two of you free drinks, a place to store your shopping bags and a concierge service that can arrange everything from Last Supper tickets to your airport transfer. One for the richest of the rich. *montenapoleone.luxury*

VIA SOLFERINO

BEST FOR: PEOPLE-WATCHING

Via Monte Napoleone is where the big brands congregate, but cobbled Via Solferino, in Brera, runs it a close second. Where Monte Napoleone is classic, this is more design-focused. Dimore Studio and Dilmos are among the design shop/galleries, while on the fashion side, the Missoni showroom hides in a plant-filled courtyard. Elsewhere, Iliprandi and Le Solferine do men's and women's shoes, respectively. *breradesigndistrict.it*

ARMANI/SILOS

BEST FOR: SERIOUS FASHION-WATCHING

The permanent exhibition at Armani's gallery, a former grain depot, is a retrospective of Giorgio Armani creations since 1980. But it's not all about him; temporary exhibitions focus on design and architecture — past shows have included a *Vogue Italia* photography exhibition, while a current retrospective on Japanese architect Tadao Ando finishes on 28 July. *armanisilos.com*

ESSENTIALS

Getting there & around

Direct connections from the UK include British Airways from Heathrow; Flybe from Manchester and Birmingham; Ryanair from Stansted, Manchester and East Midlands; and EasyJet from various UK airports. *ba.com flybe.com ryanair.com easyjet.com*
Average flight time: 2h15m.
Taxi/public transport is necessary for sights outside the centre. Uber is often pricier than regular taxis, but trams, some dating back to the 1920s, are a great option. Single journeys on the start at €1.50 (£1.30) for 90 minutes' validity; €4.50 (£4) for 24h. *atm.it*

When to go

Summers are hot and humid, getting into the 30Cs. Spring and autumn sees temperature around the 20Cs, while winters can be chilly. Room rates peak in early April for Milan Design Week.

Places mentioned

Poldi Pezzoli museum. *museopoldipezzoli.it*
Gioielleria Merzaghi 1870. *gioielleriamerzaghi.it*
Osservatorio Fondazione Prada. *fondazioneprada.org*
The Duomo. *duomomilano.it*
Café Trussardi. *trussardiallascala.com*
Art Mall Milano. *artmallmilano.com*
Fratelli Bonvini Milano. *bonvini1909.com*

Where to stay:

Antica Locanda dei Mercanti hotel has doubles from £178, B&B. *locanda.it*

More info

turismo.milano.it

How to do it

ELESTA TRAVEL's Milano Grand Tour, starts at £303 per person (up to eight people). *elestatravel.com*
CITALIA has three nights' B&B at the Sina De La Ville, including flights from Gatwick from £579. *citalia.com*

ILLUSTRATION: JOHN PLUMER

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TORONTO

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City life

TORONTO

In this ever-changing cityscape, a new world of eco-conscious urban planning is bringing community spaces to industrial wastelands — a gradual greening of Canada's biggest city. **WORDS:** *Sarah Barrell* **PHOTOGRAPHS:** *Moe Kafer*

Ghosts of raves gone by haunt the old kilns at Evergreen Brick Works. The spectral graffiti of parties past, gossamer-thin from wear and weather, are layered over crumbling walls: a faded 1980s day-glow tag here, a 1990s techno-hippie there, hands outstretched in an eternal dance move.

The Don Valley factory produced the bricks that largely built Toronto in the 1890s, and rebuilt it again after the 1904 blaze that torched the city. It fired its final clay in the 1980s, and then the free partiers moved in. Ghost graffiti aside, the place is still very much alive: bikers and hikers weave along riverside trails beneath leaning smokestacks; old kiln sheds and warehouses now function as exhibition spaces, a garden centre, cafe, bike hire shop, and farmers' market whose pavilion doubles as a winter skate rink; community learning spaces are decorated with industrial machinery.

Part of Future Cities Canada, the project by urban conservation group Evergreen is a brave new North American world: a pioneering work of architectural reclamation and recycle. From here, the pop-up Toronto cityscape peeks through Don Valley's trees to the south, dominated by towering cranes and scaffolding: a build-it-up, tear-it-down Downtown where heritage buildings might quake in their Victorian foundations.

The fight for Kensington Market, for one, rumbles on. Of all the compact city's dense patchwork of distinct neighbourhoods, hippie Kensington is the probably most characterful: an acid-wash poster-child for heritage preservation. Its low-rise, early immigration-era buildings are daubed with draft-dodger-era murals, and still house generations old family businesses, despite the threat of developers.

Win some, lose some: Toronto's is an ever-changing landscape, and nowhere more than on its lakeshore. City planning is increasingly embracing the vast waters of Lake Ontario, which beyond the original downtown core had been something of a functional backwater.

At westerly Ontario Place, I find a shiny new chrome and concrete contrast to the brickworks, comprising a convention centre, new 'urban resort' Hotel X, and the Budweiser Stage where Kenny Chesney fans wait out the afternoon before the big show, drinking beer from coolers stashed in the trunks of oversized trucks.

Further along the lake's snaking shores is the soon-to-come, mile-long Bentway trail. Dedicated to ice skating, art markets and performances, it will run under the elevated Gardiner Expressway; while Rail Deck Park is a green space set to run over the Downtown railway corridor.

Toronto's vision is looking increasingly green. Further in the future, The Meadoway will transform an underused hydro-corridor into the city's biggest park; 10 miles of grass and wildflowers stretching from Downtown to the Don Valley and beyond, returning a big chunk of this city back to nature, and connecting it with the brickworks that built its very foundations.

Farmers' market, Evergreen Brickworks

New viewing platform, NC Tower
RIGHT, FROM TOP: Graffiti Alley; popcorn with bacon, Northern Maverick Brewing Co

SEE & DO

ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO: One of the few buildings in Toronto designed by native Frank Gehry, this museum now comes with impressive Indigenous Galleries. Find intricate bone carvings, paintings and sculptures of Arctic scenes from the transitional 1960s to 1990s era of Intuit art, and 19th-century bandolier bags. Don't miss the bonkers-brilliant dress by artist Rebecca Belmore commenting on Commonwealth colonialism — part Victorian ball gown, part beaver dam, with two china saucers woven into the decolletage. *ago.ca*

DRINK TORONTO: A lively, expert walking tour giving gourmet travellers insider tips on where to drink (and dine). Options range from a blended white Niagara wine perfectly paired with Prince Edward Island oysters at one of the city's atmospheric old seafood joints to refined *cicchetti*, *fritti* and *aperitivi* at Queen West's contemporary Italian enoteca, and craft beer with artisan Canadian cheese and charcuterie at brewery-bar Northern Maverick Brewing Co. 90 minutes, C$90 (£52). *drinktoronto.ca*

MOCA: Its new purpose-designed home in the revamped Tower Automotive Building sets the Museum of Contemporary Art as the centrepiece of west Toronto's emerging Lower Junction neighbourhood. The polished industrial concrete floors and curvaceous pillars of this 1919 tower block are a beautiful blank backdrop for bold exhibitions of contemporary Canadian and international art. The first-floor bookstore cafe pegs itself as a community area. *moca.ca*

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM: This gorgeous Victorian-era museum, augmented with Daniel Libeskind's 'crystal' entrance, has a cracking natural history collection: towering Nisga'a and Haida totem poles, the Tagish Lake meteorite, and Canada's largest displayed dinosaur, the duck-billed hadrosaur. A classic family venue, ROM's Friday Night Live charms an older crowd with DJs and dancing — locally labelled 'drunk with dinosaurs' (7-11.30pm). *rom.on.ca*

THE TOUR GUYS GRAFFITI TOUR: Taking in the mosaic of murals and tags around Queen Street West, including Graffiti Alley, this 90-minute stroll is free (donations encouraged), offering a crash course on Toronto's satirical street art scene. Spot sharp cartoonish commentary on former Mayor Rob Ford's war on graffiti by Spud, expressive portraits by Elicser, and the signature yellow chicks of Uber5000. *tourguys.ca*

HIT THE WATER: The shores of Lake Ontario become a proper playground when summer comes. Bike, hike, barbecue, rollerblade and stroll along the newly installed boardwalks and man-made beaches east and west of Downtown, or at such central urban hubs as Sugar Beach or Queens Quay. Alternatively, take the ferry 15-minutes from Quay West terminal to Toronto Island (aka Center Island, part of a three-mile string of bridge-connected islets a couple of miles offshore).

EAT

£ KING'S NOODLES: This family-run Chinatown landmark is the place for Hong Kong Cantonese classics: barbecue pork, mammoth noodle soups, and sticky soy chicken. *296 Spadina Avenue*

£ SAINT LAWRENCE MARKET: Take a pan-Canadian food tour at this redbrick 19th-century market via 50-plus merchants and farmers selling everything from Montreal bagels and Ontario hot dogs to West Coast crab and Quebec poutine. *stlawrencemarket.com*

£££ CHUBBY'S JAMAICAN KITCHEN: One of formerly tatty Queen West's slick new addresses, serving cocktails as vibrant as its tropical wallpaper. Don't miss the ackee and salt fish on fried dumplings or the excellent goat curries. *chubbysjamaican.com*

£££ GREY GARDENS: This modern Canadian restaurant contrasts happily with Kensington Market's graffiti-headshop landscape. A cool-calm open kitchen dispenses dishes presented with delicate sushi-like precision, accompanied by elegantly inventive cocktails. *greygardens.ca*

The whole hog *// Toronto's nickname, Hogtown, is said to originate from its prominence as a 19th-century meatpacking hub; today it's regularly cited as one of the world's most vegan-friendly cities*

LIKE A LOCAL

WATER & WINE: It's just a 12-minute flight from Billy Bishop Airport, a short hop from Downtown Toronto, to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Toronto's beautiful wine country, and also the falls themselves (up to three hours by road in Toronto traffic). *flygta.com*

VEGAN FOOD: Parkville, Toronto's 'all-vegan' neighbourhood, now goes by the local name of Vegandale, with a dedicated food and drink festival (10 August; *vegandale.com*). Meanwhile in ritzy Yorkville, and just-opened on Queen St West, vegan comes with Vogue-style flair at elegant Planta, with upscale eats, and 'healthy' cocktails; order the dirty-spiced chai latte with pistachio.

HIPSTER FIT: Work out like only an Ossington neighbourhood local can, and flip tractor tires, swing a sledgehammer and reward yourself with a killer cold-press coffee at Academy of Lions, the city's self-titled 'crossfit/functional lifestyle outfitter'. *academyoflions.com*

Crowsnest Barbershop
BELOW: Spacing Store
RIGHT: Kimpton Saint George Hotel

BUY

THE DRAKE STORE: For classic-kitsch Canadiana, from coasters featuring Canadian Mounties to candles in vintage maple syrup cans. The annex hotel is equally arty. *drakegeneralstore.ca*

TAGLIALATELLA GALLERIES: This small but prestigiously packed new Yorkville art showroom (the first Canadian offshoot of the American gallerist) stocks the likes of Banksy and Warhol. *taglialatellagalleries.com*

SPACING STORE: Find city-focused books on art, design and Torontonian cultural etiquette, plus badges based on subway station logos and candles with neighbourhood scents. It's just one of the 140 shops in the 401 Galleries, set in a 19th-century tin factory. *401richmond.com*

COURAGE MY LOVE: Shop for vintage threads, beads and baubles, and some old-time Kensington Market hippie charm. *14 Kensington Avenue*

Anthony Bourdain, chef *//*
"The fact that over 50% of the residents of Toronto aren't from Canada is always a good thing, creatively, and for food especially. That's easily a city's biggest strength, and it's Toronto's unique strength."

SLEEP

£ THE ANNDORE HOUSE: A former apartment block with a colourful history, this 2018 opening offers determinedly dark, sexy decor, and 113 retro-sleek loft-style rooms set over 10 storeys. It's also minutes from the smart shops of Bloor and Yorkville. Constantine, the perennially packed bar-restaurant, dominates the ground floor and terrace. *theanndorehouse.com*

££ GLADSTONE HOTEL: This 19th-century railway hostelry doubles as a gallery and studio space, while a manual cage lift whisks guests to 37 rooms each decorated by a different local artist. Seasonally changing local chefs cater the cafe-bar, which hosts gigs and film screenings. *gladstonehotel.com*

£££ KIMPTON SAINT GEORGE HOTEL: From Tisha Myles's lobby wallpaper to the facade's graffiti mural by JerryRug, this new Downtown-adjacent opening has reinvented the former Holiday Inn. A daily wine hour, the Fortunate Fox pub and surrounding university buildings ensure a lively crowd. *kimptonsaintgeorge.com*

ABOVE: Dan Speck, co-owner, Henry of Pelham Family Estate Winery, Distillery District

AFTER HOURS

HIP HANGOUTS: A glass of crisp Niagara Peninsula Riesling, sunset CN Tower views and some cheeky decorative nods to its past life as a strip club are the draw at Broadview Hotel's Rooftop Bar. Or head underground, to the Drake Hotel's basement for dance parties, slam poetry plus forays up for panoramic views from roof terrace bar. *thebroadviewhotel.ca thedrake.ca*

THE DISTILLERY DISTRICT: Converted 19th-century grain stores host shiny bars and a couple of independent theatres. If you can cope with the cobbled streets after a few cocktails, it's easy pickings for partying. *thedistillerydistrict.com*

CLUBS: After the recent bemoaned closure of beloved Uniun, the inclusive alternative for clubbers is CODA, where you can dance until dawn — but arrive before midnight for the best chance of entry. For sportier after-sundown pursuits, College Street's Track & Field is the place for beers, bocce bowling and the Ontario-native, disk-flicking table game of crokinole. *codatoronto.com trackandfieldbar.com*

ESSENTIALS

Getting there & around

As of this summer, British Airways now flies non-stop from both Heathrow and Gatwick to Toronto Pearson Airport, along with Air Canada, Air Transat and WestJet. Air Transat also flies from Manchester. *ba.com aircanada.com airtransat.com westjet.com*
Average flight time: 8h.

The journey between Pearson and Downtown takes about half an hour in a taxi, for C$60 (£35), and 25 minutes by direct rail link, which costs C$24 (£14). Getting around Toronto by public transport costs from £7 with a TTC Day Pass. *ttc.ca*

Via Rail serves destinations beyond the city, largely from the recently restored Union Station (a building that's reminiscent of New York's Grand Central), including nearby Niagara Falls and the wine region of Niagara-on-the-Lake. *viarail.com*

A Toronto CityPass provides access to key city attractions such as the CN Tower, Royal Ontario Museum and Ripley's Aquarium of Canada. From £52 (adults), £34 (children). *citypass.com/toronto*

When to go

Summers are often humid but sunny, with temperatures averaging in the mid-to-late 20s. Fiery-leafed fall is often golden-warm and celebratory, with Thanksgiving (14 October), Toronto International Film Festival (5-15 September; *tiff.net*), and the gargantuan arts event Nuit Blanche (5 October; *toronto.ca/nuitblanche*) taking over the city. Long winters and brief springs can be blustery, snowy and as cold as -3C.

More info

seetorontonow.com
ontariotravel.net
uk-keepexploring.canada.travel

How to do it

CANADIAN AFFAIR offers four nights at the new Kimpton Saint George Hotel from £1,023 per person including, return flights and transfers with Air Transat. *canadianaffair.com*

ILLUSTRATION: JOHN PLUMER

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EDGE WALK
AT THE CN TOWER

TORONTO, CANADA

DISCOVER **BANFF NATIONAL PARK** THIS AUTUMN

Long days, clear skies and wide-open spaces begging to be explored make the Canadian Rockies an inspired autumn destination

It's easy to be dazzled by Alberta's exquisite Banff National Park during the summer months. The Rockies dominate the skyline, there's a seemingly endless array of outdoor activities on offer — from taking a gondola to a mountain peak to rock climbing — and the food and cultural scenes are buzzing. But the region's best-kept secret? Autumn, when the majority of visitors have left and the park is decked out in beautiful fall colours, with mild weather and days still long. It's the perfect time to explore and reconnect with nature. While it's impossible to fully explore the vastness of Banff National Park in one season — let alone in one weekend — here's what you can squeeze into three days in one of the most spectacular natural regions on Earth.

DAY 1

Hot springs and hiking

Ease into the adventure activities for which the park is renowned by taking the Banff Gondola to the summit of Sulphur Mountain (7,486 ft), where scenes of six mountain ranges and the sweeping Bow Valley await. Here, Sky Bistro puts the 'up' in upscale dining, offering soaring views and a distinctly Canadian seasonal menu. For those looking to walk off their lunch, there are numerous short hiking trails extending from the peak. When the cool evening air sends you back down the mountain, it needn't send you indoors; the Banff Upper Hot Springs are open late into the evening all year round, offering the chance to stargaze while submerged in geothermally heated waters of up to 47C.

DAY 2

Wildlife hotspots

For a different kind of mountain experience, start the day by taking the Lake Louise Summer Gondola to ascend the Rocky Mountain, while catching sight of wild grizzly bears and the larch trees below. From the start of summer through to the first week of October, Discover Banff Tours offers evening wildlife safaris. Departing just before dark, the bus tour takes in known animal hotspots, with possible sightings ranging from mountain goats and deer to grizzly bears and chipmunks. Autumn also brings with it elk rutting season and the rare opportunity to glimpse these huge bulls vying for female attention, their distinctive bugle call echoing through the crags. Going with a tour ensures you can view the animals from a safe distance.

DAY 3

Mountains and culture

Sample Banff's burgeoning foodie scene at Juniper Hotel Bistro's popular weekend brunch, where the pulled-pork poutine vies for attention with the incredible valley views. From here, it's just a short distance to Mount Norquay and the most hands-on way to experience the Rockies: climbing. Even complete beginners can enjoy the thrill of being face-to-rock on Norquay's via ferrata. Along four routes, ranging from an easy two-and-a-half hours to a more challenging six, the adventure-inclined can climb ladders, traverse suspension bridges and gulp in lungfuls of crisp mountain air, all under the gaze of a highly experienced ACMG-certified guide. Limbs worn out and spirits soaring, it's time to head to the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, which offers a year-round programme of events and performances, as well as the Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival (26 October-3 November).

IMAGES: CHRIS AMAT; NOEL HENDRICKSON; PAUL ZIZKA

Clockwise from top: Hiking Larch Valley in the Lake Louise area, breakfast at the Juniper Bistro, Banff Gondola

Essentials

Getting There: Multiple airlines including American Airlines, Air Canada and British Airways fly direct from Heathrow and Gatwick to Calgary. Banff and Lake Louise is a scenic 90-minute drive from Calgary on the Trans Canada Highway. *americanairlines.co.uk aircanada.com ba.com*

In partnership with Travel Alberta Canada

To plan your autumn holiday to Banff and Lake Louise, visit *banfflakelouise.com/fall*

LUXURY TRAVEL

IMAGE: SHINTA MANI WILD

If you've deep pockets, the whole world is your playground. But how do you want to experience it? We bring you 10 of the most exclusive ways to explore the planet, from private jet tours to small-ship expedition cruises, ultra-bespoke holidays, high-end homestays and more... Words: Sarah Barrell, Francisca Kellett, Sam Lewis, James Litston, Jonathan Thompson, Simon Usborne and Kate Wills

01 PAY-BACK TIME: PHILANTHROPIC TRIPS

A fortnight on a superyacht or access to a private tropical island no longer cuts it: for high-net-worth individuals, there's major kudos in giving something back to the communities they visit on their travels — and experiencing something astonishing while they're at it. This is why many high-end travel companies now offer extraordinary adventures that also benefit local communities. Properties such as Shinta Mani Wild in Cambodia, and Misool in Indonesia — which charge premium prices for exclusive experiences — give a percentage of profits to conservation and community projects. They're not alone;tour operators such as The Explorations Company now specialise in combining luxury adventures with philanthropic endeavours. It all adds up to one thing: more money going to the places that need it. *See our feature on p.190 for more.* **FK**

IMAGES: SHAWN HEINRICHS; 700'000 HEURES

FROM LEFT: Stand-up paddleboarding at Misool, Indonesia; lantern-lit dinner at 700,000 Heures

02

NOVELTY STAYS: THE NEW NICHE HOTEL

When it comes to accommodation, many travellers today are after something far from the ordinary: a quirky Airbnb stay, perhaps (think an Airstream trailer in Palm Springs or a windmill in Amsterdam) or a glamping experience in a shepherd's hut, yurt or gypsy caravan.

"The bar for what constitutes a novel and covetable holiday experience has been raised exponentially," says Lucie Greene, a trend forecaster at JWT Innovation. "We increasingly want complete immersion from our travel time, so, of course, the place where you stay is a big part of that."

Rising to the challenge, 2019's hottest luxury hotel openings have a story behind them. Take The Jaffa Hotel in Tel Aviv, a former convent and hospital that has the remains of a 13th-century Crusader fortress in the lobby. Or the Capella Ubud, Bali, where, on arrival, visitors receive a survival kit (sunscreen, insect repellent and a map), plus a carved walking stick to help pick their way over the suspension bridges leading to 22 black canvas tents with saltwater plunge pools.

But who says hotels have to stay in one spot? From 'floatotels' to luxury mobile camping, some of the very best hotels these days seem to have itchy feet. For example, last year saw the launch of 700,000 Heures, a nomadic hotel that changes location every six months. Rather than book a room, guests pay a membership fee starting at £1,800. The first wandering hotel in the world has so far popped up in a 19th-century Apulian palazzo and a traditional Khmer house in Siem Reap, Cambodia. It's currently occupying a property in Lençois, northeastern Brazil.

The brainchild of French former theatre designer Thierry Teyssier, 700,000 Heures (named after the average number of hours in the human lifespan) redefines existing notions of what a hotel can be. "Does it need to be four walls, a roof, rooms?" asks Teyssier. "Hoteliers need to think outside the box and imagine their hotel as a hub for a local network — of people, food, crafts, and excursions — that extends far beyond its gates." **KW**

03

FLIGHTS OF FANCY: PRIVATE JET TOURS

The private jet tour is taking off as a hot-ticket luxury trip, a multi-destination model reaching new heights for those who can afford it.

It's the ultimate package holiday for high-flying customers. In the space of just a few weeks, you can tick off even the longest of bucket lists while circling the globe in unadulterated luxury. From the moment your chauffeur knocks on your front door to the moment you let yourself back in with a passport full of stamps, you won't have to lift a finger. Over the course of a single trip, you could be hiking Machu Picchu, snorkelling the Great Barrier Reef and hot air ballooning across the Serengeti, as well as sampling the finest restaurants in Marrakech, Shanghai and St Petersburg. No need to worry about tiresome airport banalities like visa-filling, luggage-collecting or customs-queueing, either — with all of that taken care of, you're free to hopscotch your way around the planet in style.

Private jet holidays like this are the latest trend for the cash-rich, time-poor: tailor-made journeys traversing the globe in constant five-star luxury, aboard state-of-the-art aircraft. In addition to the regular crew, you'll find an elite concierge, a dedicated doctor and an executive chef on board, with your every need anticipated and professionally met. And then there are the destinations. From UNESCO World Heritage Sites to picture-perfect beaches, exhilarating cities to tropical islands, this is the way to embrace the Earth's highlights a la A-list.

Despite the high cost of these trips (you won't get much change out of £100,000 for a full round-the-world itinerary), their popularity is soaring. The market leader, TCS World Travel, has reported a 25% growth in the number of its jet tours between 2017 and 2019, with five new itineraries recently added, and many trips sold out up to 12 months in advance. The company now has a fleet of three dedicated jets, including a specially adapted Boeing 757, plus an Airbus A318 with 28 lie-flat seats for shorter tours.

"Private jet vacations make things seamless and worry-free, optimising

IMAGES: GETTY; SCOTT DUNN

travellers' time where it matters most," says company president Shelley Cline. "We allow guests to dispense with the hassle of expeditionary travel without losing the adventure, ensuring that the only thing they have to focus on is being immersed in the moment."

That ability to switch off — to fully engage with a place without worrying about your schedule, or how you're getting back to your hotel or onto your next destination — is key to this model. It's maximum engagement for zero effort, as you drop into a carefully chosen cavalcade of exotic global highlights. Essentially, companies like TCS have taken the cruise-ship model, replacing the boat with a plane and cranking the speed and luxury up to 11.

Despite lengthy waiting lists for tours like this, the guests keep coming. Laine Silverfield, a 68-year-old from Florida who was recently a passenger on a TCS round-the-world trip, says the rewards of a trip like this more than outweigh the price. "This is an experience which goes far beyond the journey itself," she says. "The concept of being truly immersed in a culture appealed to us, yet we didn't want to have to compromise on luxury. Travelling by private jet was the perfect way to have the best of both worlds. It allowed us to maximise our vacation time too, because we didn't waste a moment standing in line at airports, waiting for baggage or sourcing local currency. We simply walked off the jet and the cars were there waiting for us on the tarmac. Travel doesn't get any better than this."

A number of traditional luxury tour operators are on board with the trend too, including Scott Dunn and Abercrombie & Kent. According to the latter, most of the passengers involved are professionals or entrepreneurs aged between 50 and 70."These are educated, active and accomplished people," says Geoffrey Kent, the company's founder, chairman and CEO. "Many weren't able to travel before as they were building their careers, and now they're making up for lost time. We're seeing requests for private jet holidays from multigenerational families too. With family members often spread out across the world, a shared holiday like this is seen as valuable, uninterrupted time spent together."

Not to be outdone, luxury hotel chains are also embracing the private jet action, with flight paths adapted to take in five-star properties. Four Seasons, for example, recently announced the commissioning of a second palatial plane, following the success of its own round-the-world itinerary. Stops on its current tour include New York, Tokyo, Beijing and the Maldives, with passengers given Mongolian cashmere blankets, Bose noise-cancelling headphones and iPads loaded with the latest Hollywood releases to keep after the trip.

That level of luxury is par for the course on this kind of tour, where frills might include capacious Italian-leather seats, diamond-encrusted cutlery and generous purses of local currency handed out. It's hard to think of a more opulent way to see the world — though, of course, the private jet industry's environmental credentials need to be addressed. For the majority of us, all we can hope is that as popularity and competition rise, prices will fall, because round-the-world private jet tours have to be the ultimate in globetrotting. **JT**

FROM LEFT: Halong Bay, Vietnam; interior, Four Seasons private jet; pintxos in San Sebastián, part of Scott Dunn's The Ultimate Foodie Tour

FIVE OF THE BEST **PRIVATE TOURS**

AMAN: THE GRANDEST TOUR
Aman's 22-day itinerary takes in everything from Vietnam's beaches to Greece's historical heartland, while staying in Aman's beautiful properties. There are only 16 seats on the annual trip, each costing £89,000. *aman.com/expeditions/private-jet*

TCS WORLD TRAVEL: WORLD OF ADVENTURES
Taking in four continents and nine countries over 24 days, layovers include the Seychelles and the Galápagos. Activities range from gorilla trekking in Rwanda to river rafting in Bali. *tcsworldtravel.co.uk*

SCOTT DUNN: THE ULTIMATE FOODIE TOUR
A three-night tour of Spain's gourmet hotspots by private jet, with exclusive cooking experiences in San Sebastián, Seville and Majorca. £8,000 per person. *scottdunn.com/mimo*

ABERCROMBIE & KENT: 'WINGS OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN'
A 14-day private-jet odyssey taking in the likes of Nice, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Pompeii and the Amalfi Coast. All for just £25,000 a head. *abercrombiekent.com*

FOUR SEASONS: INTERNATIONAL INTRIGUE
Jet from Seattle to London, ticking off nine bucket list destinations over 23 days. A snip at just £113,000 a seat. *fourseasons.com/privatejet*

04 VERY (VERY) GOOD VEGAN

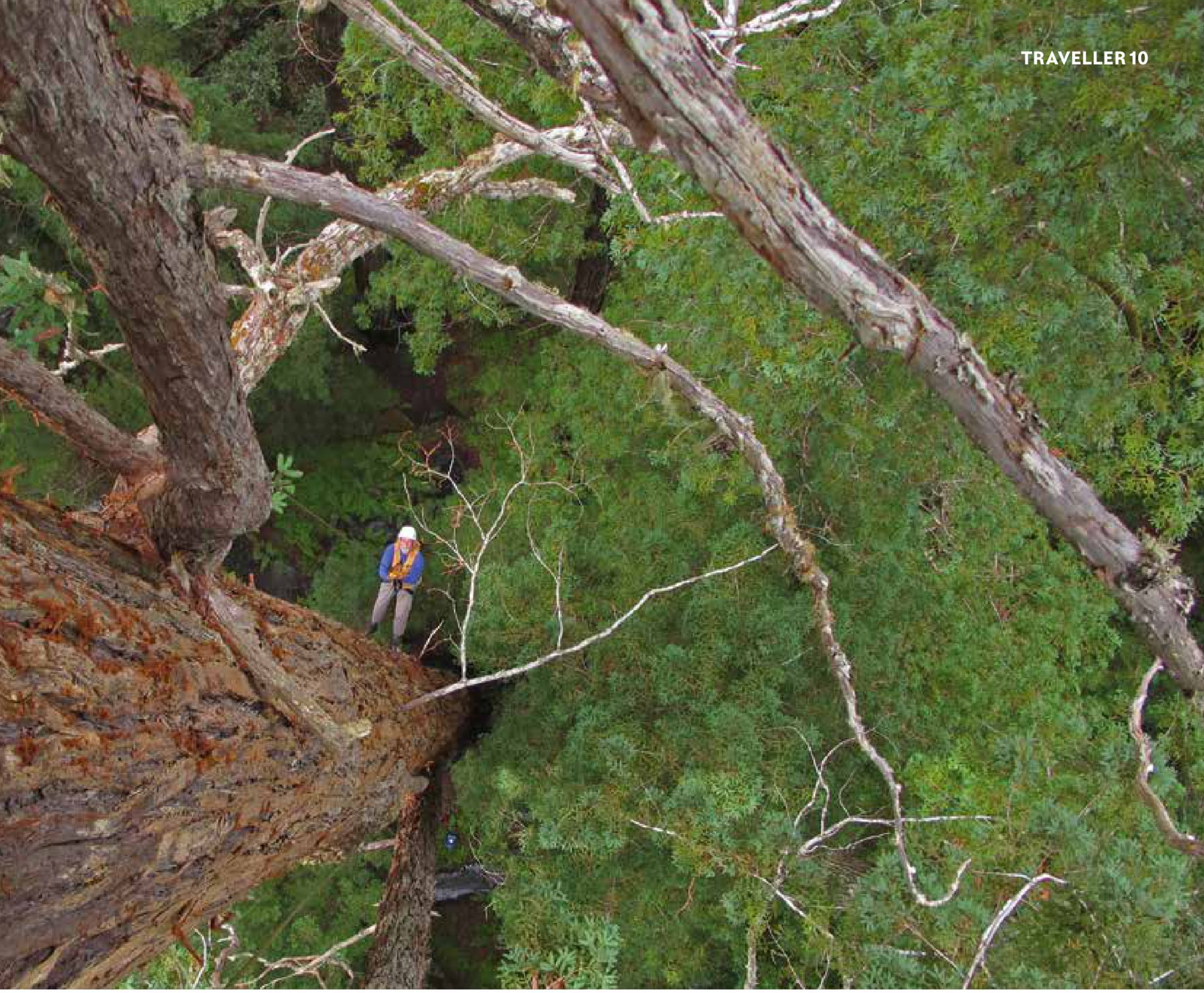
The days of the etiolated tofu burger are — mostly — gone. The vegan revolution, despite its egalitarian roots, is moving into white tablecloth territory. Plant-based fine-dining establishments are blossoming worldwide, proving that removing ingredients from menus doesn't have to result in a lack of flavour or flair; less is definitely more.

Case in point: California's Cafe Gratitude franchise, where highlights include the Raw Zucchini Cilantro Hummus and Pulled Mushroom Sandwich, is growing a healthy number of restaurants in the Golden State's fancier zip codes.

Out east in Toronto, an entire district has been renamed Vegandale due to its crop of clean green restaurants. Try Planta, in Yorkville, for elegant 'crab' cake and retro-tropical decor (read more in our feature on p.150).

Meanwhile, on home turf, Michelin-starred restaurants worth their salt-baked celeriac are perfecting plant-based tasting menus. At London's Gauthier Soho, French chef and vegan convert Alexis Gauthier has a modern vegan tasting menu and intends to be fully vegan by 2020. Even that bastion of classical dining, The Ritz London, is offering special menus that include a chestnut risotto with toasted yeast and romanesco, and a pithivier of celeriac with truffle and hazelnut. And if you don't know what a pithivier is, then it's back to tofu for you. *cafegratitude.com gauthiersoho.co.uk theritzlondon.com plantarestaurants.com* **SB**

FROM LEFT: I Am Transformed, Cafe Gratitude; climbing a giant sequoia, California



05 NEW EXTREMES: THE LUXPEDITION

The modern travel industry increasingly groans with neologisms, with the likes of staycation and babymoon among the more established of irritants. Try this more recent addition for size: the luxpedition.

No longer content to pour money into Maldivian sun loungers, Mediterranean-bound superyachts, or the palace hotels of ski resorts such as Courchevel, a growing breed of wealthy traveller is donning their crampons and reaching for new extremes. Boutique operators such as London-based Pelorus put together one-off itineraries in which luxury is more often access than it is Michelin-starred cuisine or sumptuous spas: think climbing giant sequoias with climate change researchers in California, or off-road crossings of Namibia with comfortable tents.

These wealthy adventurers often go in search of bragging rights. The luxury market on Everest is booming as premium operators lay on 'flash' expeditions for the time-pressed executive. Last year, clients of Austrian outfit Furtenbach Adventures got to the summit and back in just 23 days, compared to the more typical 65 days. The climbers, who included an automotive consultant and the owner of a solar energy company, had trained in altitude tents that mimic high elevations allowing them to acclimatise before departure.

Base camp on the Tibetan side of Everest is becoming ever more luxurious thanks to road access and demand among this new breed of adventurer for real beds, saunas and opulent dining tents. A Sherpa each has become standard, but these packages don't come cheap; Furtenbach charged $110,000 (£85,158) for its flash expedition, while Nepali outfit Seven Summit Treks laid on a $130,000 (£100,641) 'VVIP' package last year. It included a mid-climb break, via helicopter, at a five-star Kathmandu hotel.

Similarly, Antarctica used to be the preserve of sponsored expeditions by hardy adventurers with beards and frozen toes. Now anyone can pay to stay in the world's remotest — and perhaps coldest — luxury hotel. Whichaway Camp, launched in 2016, sits on the edge of the Schirmacher Oasis, five and a half hours by private jet from Cape Town. White Desert, the company that runs the camp, created six pods with en suite bathrooms, set around a dining pod with fur-lined chairs for meals prepared by its top chef.

Visitors can hike and ski or visit science research bases. A second flight, by propeller plane, reaches an Emperor penguin colony. Or they can fly even further to step onto the South Pole itself for one of the world's most expensive selfies — week-long trips cost from $92,500 (£71,610) per person.

Earlier this year, I had a taste of this new way of travelling when I joined a London-based Russian businessman on his luxury yacht for a week of ski-mountaineering in Arctic Norway. Andrey Yakunin, a fund manager, spent £8m to build the boat. "I skied in Courchevel years ago and hated it," he said. And so, *Firebird* was born. It's been insulated for the icy fjords, and is soon to take private groups to Svalbard and Antarctica. Chartering it for a week in Norway costs a glacier-cool £47,000, though that does include a mountain guide. *pelorusx.com furtenbachadventures.com white-desert.com sevensummittreks.com oysteryachts.com* **SU**

IMAGES: CAFE GRATITUDE; PELORUS

JAPAN
A ROMANTIC RETREAT

Honeymoons are the ideal opportunity for that all-out trip. Expert Travel Designer David, from bespoke operator VIVID Travel, crafts the ultimate romantic itinerary in Japan

For the perfect romantic getaway, start in **TOKYO**, wandering the ancient temples and absorbing the culture. Take a night-time helicopter ride over the city, admiring the sparkling night lights together. Journey on to **KAWAGUCHIKO**, one of the Fuji Five Lakes, for one of the best views of **MOUNT FUJI** from your private open-air spring bath on the balcony of the traditional ryokan that you'll be staying at.

Hop aboard the famous bullet train and head on to **KYOTO**, one of the best-preserved and most romantic cities in Japan. Here you'll be able to tour ancient temples and UNESCO World Heritage Sites before finishing the day in style with a ride on the Sagano Scenic Railway, also known as the Romantic Train. You'll travel from rural **KAMEOKA** through a forested ravine and to **ARASHIYAMA** bamboo forest. Stay in the pretty castle town of **MATSUE**, one of only 12 originals in Japan with excellent displays of samurai armour and other feudal-era craftmanship inside. You can even bless your new marriage Japanese-style at the Izumo Taisha Shrine, dedicated to Okunushi-no-Okami, the deity of good relationships and happy marriages.

This unforgettable adventure will finish up in **OSAKA**, the undisputed epicentre of Japanese street food, with a delectable evening culinary tour — anyone for octopus balls?

Essentials

If you're feeling inspired, speak to an expert VIVID Travel Designer, all of whom have lived, worked or travelled extensively in their chosen country, to create your perfect honeymoon

VIVID TRAVEL

To find out more, visit *vivid.travel*

SHA Residences, Alicante, Spain

06 DR FEEL-GOOD: NEW-ERA SPA BREAKS

Back pain? Sleepless nights? Hot flushes? A specialised spa break might just be the answer. Once the preserve of the plastic surgery-seeking starlet, increasing numbers of travellers are turning to medicalised spas to treat specific mental and physical health issues, from stress and weight problems to insomnia, chronic pain and the menopause. Hook up to a vitamin-packed IV drip and banish those holiday blues.

PAIN MANAGEMENT: Many spa retreats, such as Thailand's Kamalaya and Chiva-Som, employ physiotherapists and Pilates instructors to help guests recover from injuries. Healing Holidays recommends The Structural Revival Programme at Kamalaya to correct imbalances, realign the body and improve posture, with five-night packages from £2,425. At Chiva-Som, cranial relief therapy is used for pain management and there are specific programmes for those in remission from cancer: the 10-night Cell Vitality package, costs from £7,299 per person. *healingholidays.co.uk*

MEDICAL TESTING: Spas are increasingly using qualified doctors to carry out consultations for treatments that stray far from the mere medi-pedicure. Six Senses' Integrated Wellness programmes, for example, see doctors measure your heart rate, oxygen uptake and arterial efficiency with the results analysed to work out where stress, exercise and lifestyle are having impact. Your records are transferred to whatever property you stay at, to continue treatment each time you holiday, with costs dependent on treatment. *sixsenses.com*

FIX AND FOLLOW-UP: Health and Fitness Travel offers wellness programmes where clients can book intensive quick-fix, three-day trips or 28-day packages at hotel spas that use bioresonance feedback machines and employ naturopaths to give advice on everything from lifestyle, diet, exercise and mindfulness strategies. The operator follows up with Skype consultations to give clients ongoing advice and support once they return home. *healthandfitnesstravel.com*

HORMONE HELP: For help dealing with hormonal changes, including the menopause, Healing Holidays recommends Palácio Estoril, just 20 minutes from the centre of Lisbon, where a seven-day healthy-ageing programme costs from £2,519 per person. *healingholidays.co.uk*

SLEEP SOUNDLY: Suffer from insomnia? Check into Spain's SHA Wellness Clinic to be assessed by a team of specialists who will recommend treatments such as acupuncture as well as a personalised diet to enhance sleep and overall wellbeing: seven nights from £4,655 per person. *shawellnessclinic.com*

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: For clients coping with a traumatic event such as divorce or bereavement, Wellbeing Escapes is gaining a reputation for rejuvenating spa stays. Its retreat in the Dominican Republic, hosted by holistic expert Kyra Montagu, offers a combination of natural therapies including nutrition, herbal medicine, yoga and massage: seven nights from £1,900 per person. *wellbeingescapes.co.uk*

WEIGHT & DIGESTIVE ISSUES: The Original FX Mayr in Austria hosts a week-long programme that includes mitochondria therapy, a treatment that aims to boost the metabolism and break down fat deposits for enhanced weight loss: from £1,300. *original-mayr.com* **SL**

IMAGES: SHA WELLNESS CLINIC

07 SUITS YOU: SUPER-BESPOKE HOLIDAYS

Specialist guides, VIP access to sights, life goals up for grabs: welcome to the new era of hyper-personalised, tailor-made tours.

As far as final resting places go, the side of a Shell garage on the road out of Inverness isn't exactly what you'd expect for one of Scotland's most famous kings. But this is where Aeneas O'Hara has taken me to see the gravestone of King Duncan, slain by Macbeth near Elgin in the 11th-century. This place isn't in any guidebooks, but O'Hara's bespoke travel company, Away from the Ordinary, is one of a growing number of companies specialising in arranging tailor-made trips to off-the-beaten-track locations. If you've got the money, you can choose your own adventure. From petrol station to polar region, luxury travel operators are increasingly going to the ends of the earth to curate completely personalised trips to inaccessible destinations.

"Holiday time is becoming increasingly precious and people no longer want the generic, one-size-fits-all approach," says O'Hara, who specialises in Scotland tours. He recently organised an Outlander tour with the guide who took the author Diana Gabaldon around the Highlands, a helicopter ride to remote whisky distilleries and a pilgrimage to visit Aberdeen Angus cows. "Before I start planning a trip, I'll have a few conversations with the individual to get to know their style, what excites them, what they don't like. Luxury means different things to different people — some will be really happy in a Michelin-starred restaurant, others will prefer cooking over an open fire on the beach. It's about creating unique experiences for the client."

The demand for made-to-measure experiences means holidays are no longer booked, they're curated. Travel agents have been elevated to travel designers who can arrange access to places that would be out of bounds to most of us. Paris-based Traveller Made is an elite network of the world's top travel designers who draw on each other's little black books to make seemingly impossible holiday fantasies a reality. Even mainstream tour operators are catering to the demand for super-bespoke trips. Abercrombie & Kent, for example, offers 'Inspiring Expeditions', which are all personally designed and accompanied by its esteemed founder Geoffrey Kent.

Bespoke Italian operator Bellini Travel, meanwhile, specialises in exclusive insider experiences, such as an after-hours, candle-lit tour of St Mark's Basilica in Venice or a private dinner for two in the Sistine Chapel. "We all want to feel like we've escaped the crowds and had an authentic experience when we travel," says founder Emily FitzRoy. "This trend is partly down to our social media identity and experience culture, and it's also just the bragging rights of having done something none of your friends have."

But when there's little, if any, of the world left to map, there's real currency in finding uniquely focused ways to experience it. "Our personalised planning service is becoming more and more popular," says Jenny Graham, director of Quintessentially Travel, a luxury travel concierge company. "It's all about what you can do in familiar destinations to make them exclusive and extraordinary." If money is no object, then nothing and nowhere is off-limits. "We've arranged for clients to travel around Rajasthan by rickshaw, to take part in the Baja Challenge (an off-road buggy race in Mexico) and for one City boy to spend seven days living with a tribe in Ethiopia," says Graham. "One honeymooning couple went deep sea diving to remote archipelagos in Indonesia with marine photographer Shawn Heinrichs. You're talking over £100,000 per person, per week for that kind of experience."

Away from the Ordinary's experiences start at a rather more affordable £4,000 per couple, per week, depending on the activities. Aeneas O'Hara says that although planning personalised adventures is a lot more work, he wouldn't be interested in generic Scottish trips. "From my perspective, the trend for bespoke travel keeps things interesting," he says. "Who wants to do whisky, golf, castle on repeat?"

awayfromtheordinary.com bellinitravel.com travellermade.com abercrombiekent.com quintessentiallytravel.com **KW**

> "One couple went diving in Indonesia with marine photographer Shawn Heinrichs. You're talking over £100,000 per person, per week"

FROM TOP: Away from the Ordinary destination Glenfeshie Estate, Cairngorm National Park; interior, Glenfeshie Estate

IMAGES: GLENFESHIE ESTATE

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IMAGE: NICKI ANTOGNINI

ABOVE: Riders Hotel in Laax, Switzerland

08 FIVE-STAR SKIING: NEW-ERA ALPINE HOTELS

Back in 2007, the Experimental Group launched its speakeasy-style Experimental Cocktail Club on a small side street in Paris. The group has since expanded into hip boutique hotels, wine bars and restaurants, setting up venues in London, New York, Ibiza and, more recently, the Alps. The Experimental Chalet, which opened in the Swiss ski resort of Verbier last December, recently finished its first season to resounding success. This new take on mountain luxury is decked out in bright tiles and muted velvets, with a buzzy brasserie and an airy cocktail bar on the first floor. Laid-back and clubby, it's the sort of place where you're more likely to hang out in jeans and trainers than get dressed up for dinner.

Valsana Hotel & Appartements, which launched in the Swiss resort of Arosa last year, has a similar feel. The funky offspring of the old-school Tschuggen Grand Hotel, it's decorated with splashes of bright colours and bold prints. There's also a nice nod to sustainability in the form of an ice battery, which converts waste heat to reusable energy.

The newly refurbished Riders Hotel in Laax, meanwhile, has a distinctly industrial feel, featuring plywood beds, polished concrete floors and a basement nightclub. It's set to reopen in late September this year, in time for the upcoming ski season.

Another new player on the Alpine accommodation scene is the boutique Huus Hotel in Gstaad, its open-plan hang-out areas decorated with jewel-toned furniture and vast bookshelves. There's also a weekend DJ and a tempting gin-based cocktail menu for apres-ski refreshments.

Communal areas, it seems, are key, as demonstrated by Maison et Hôtels Sibuet's Terminal Neige. The brand's Refuge du Montenvers, in Chamonix, and Terminal Neige Totem, a ski-in ski-out hotel in Flaine, offer an on-trend mix of rough wood, exposed light bulbs and colourful statement furniture.

Those who prefer the 'apres' to the 'ski' should keep an eye out for nightclub brand La Folie Douce, which last year opened its first hotel in Chamonix. Set in the former Savoy Palace, this slopeside hotel has four fashionable restaurants, a spa, a cracking kids' club and daily yoga classes.

The one thing these places have in common is fun. Ski hard, then head back and party hard. Alternatively, relax with an Aperol spritz, tuck into comfort food or hang out in the lobby listening to a DJ. Like any good city club, there's no need to leave. *experimentalchalet.com valsana.ch ridershotel.com huusgstaad.com montenvers.terminal-neige.com lafoliedoucehotels.com* **FK**

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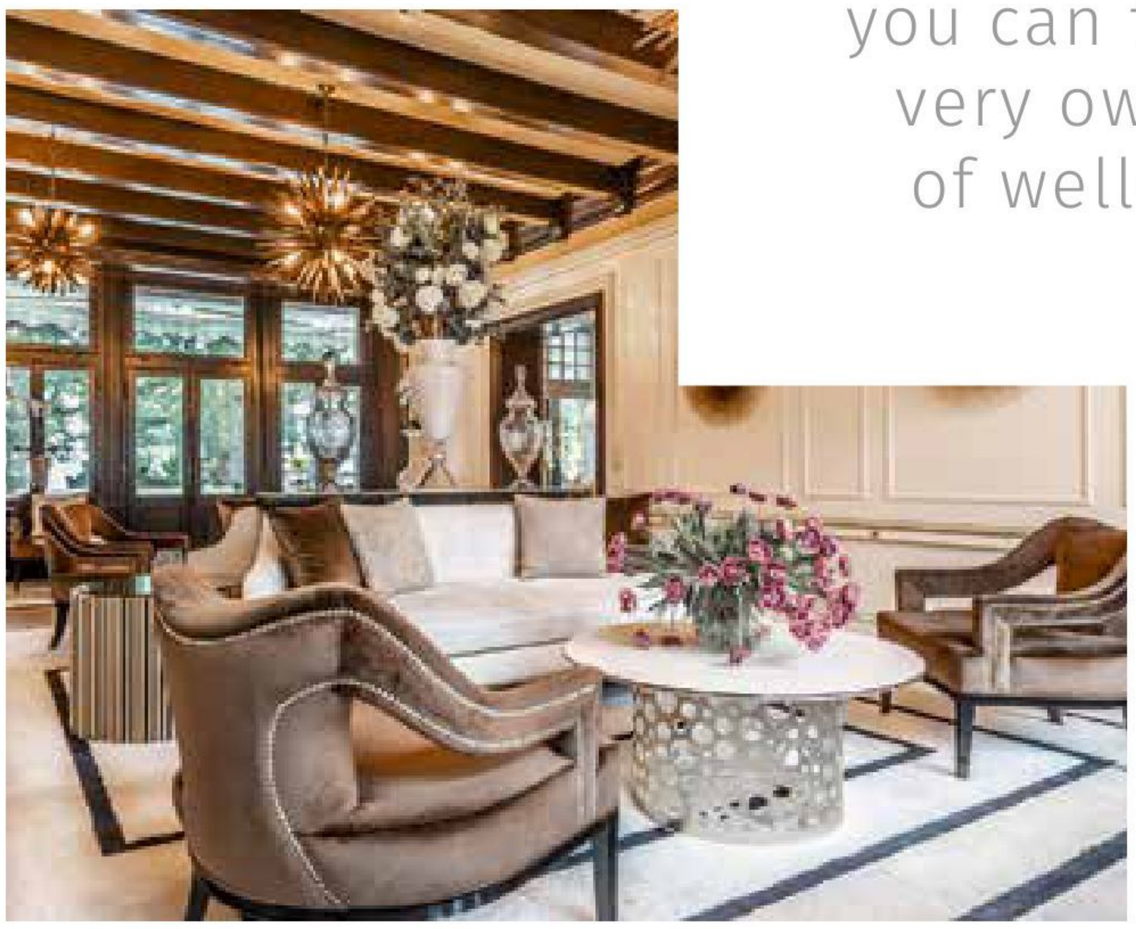

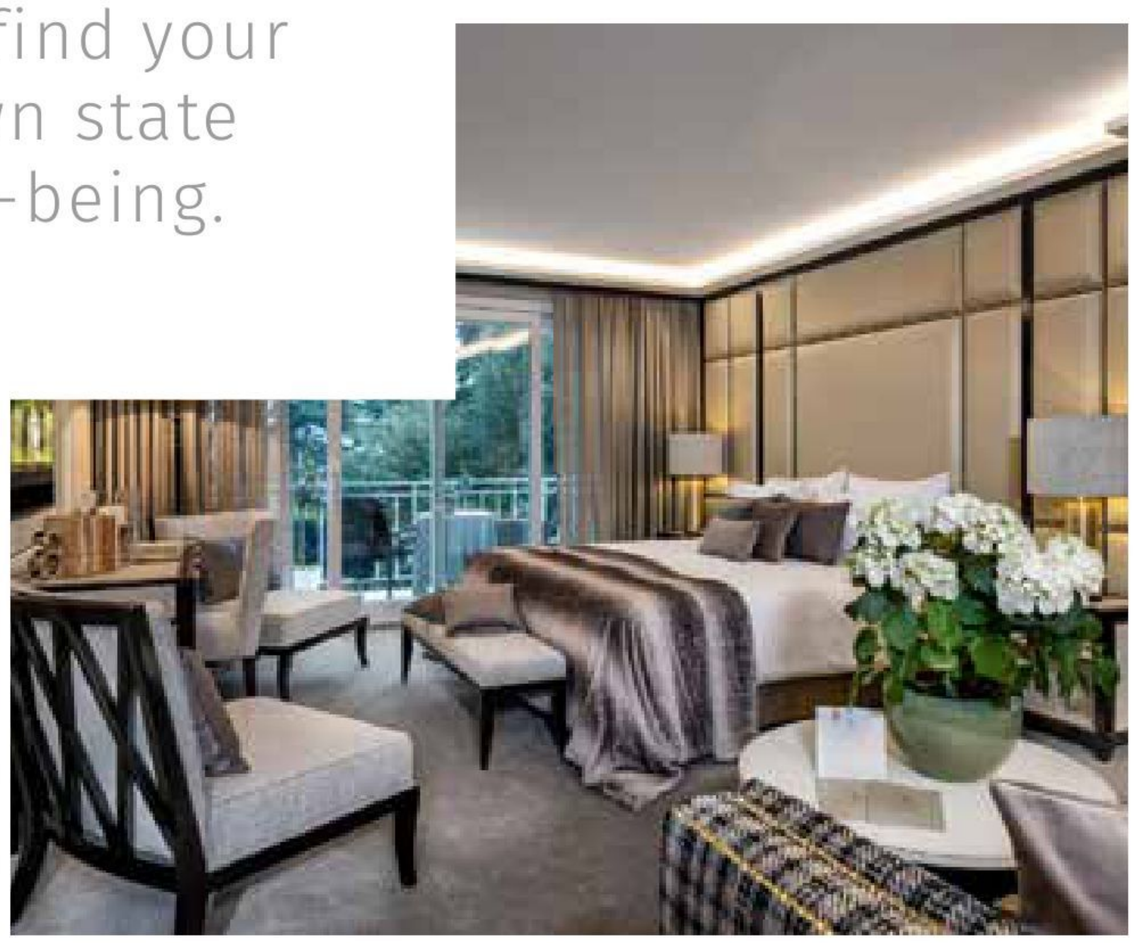

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09
SMALL SHIPS: BIG HORIZONS

The appetite for small-ship expedition cruising grows apace. If you want a truly immersive way to discover a far-flung destination, get on board.

Forget sharing a ship with a cast of thousands; the big news for big spenders is small-ship cruises. Traditionally, expedition ships were somewhat scant on home comforts, tending towards an ice-breaker in the Arctic or a hardy, frills-free research vessel. But the current boom in small-ship cruising is found firmly at the luxurious end of the market, a phenomenon driven by ever-more adventurous passengers. Crystal Cruises, for instance, recently announced its foray into expedition cruising in order to meet the demand from its customers, 65% of whom are repeat guests.

With several new expedition ships due to hit the waves this year, the choice of destinations and experiences available to travellers is rapidly expanding. When Crystal Cruises' *Crystal Endeavor* launches in August 2020, the all-suite, purpose-built ship will be the world's most spacious expedition yacht, with butler-serviced suites, Michelin-inspired cuisine and anchor-free positioning technology designed to lessen its environmental impact. The ship's inaugural season will include itineraries such as a round-trip from Tokyo to Russia's Far East and a voyage from Taipei to Bali by way of the Philippines.

Coral Expeditions' all-new *Coral Adventurer*, meanwhile, debuted in April 2019 with a journey through the Indonesian archipelago to Australia's northern shores. Among its itineraries for 2020 is a one-off, 60-day circumnavigation of Australia; costing from £21,445 per person, this is the ideal pick for passengers with deep pockets. Exclusivity is the name of the game here; the ship accommodates just 120 guests in 60 spacious staterooms, and an open-bridge encourages guests to drop by a for chat with the captain.

An even more upmarket option comes in the form of *Hanseatic Inspiration*, a five-star, state-of-the-art ship from Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, due to set sail to Antarctica in October this year. The 230-passenger ship will feature extendable glass balconies, enabling passengers to perch directly above the waves, plus a fleet of Zodiac boats. Next year's itineraries include the Amazon River, Chilean fjords and American Great Lakes; a 14-day cruise from Chicago to Toronto in June costs from £6,745pp.

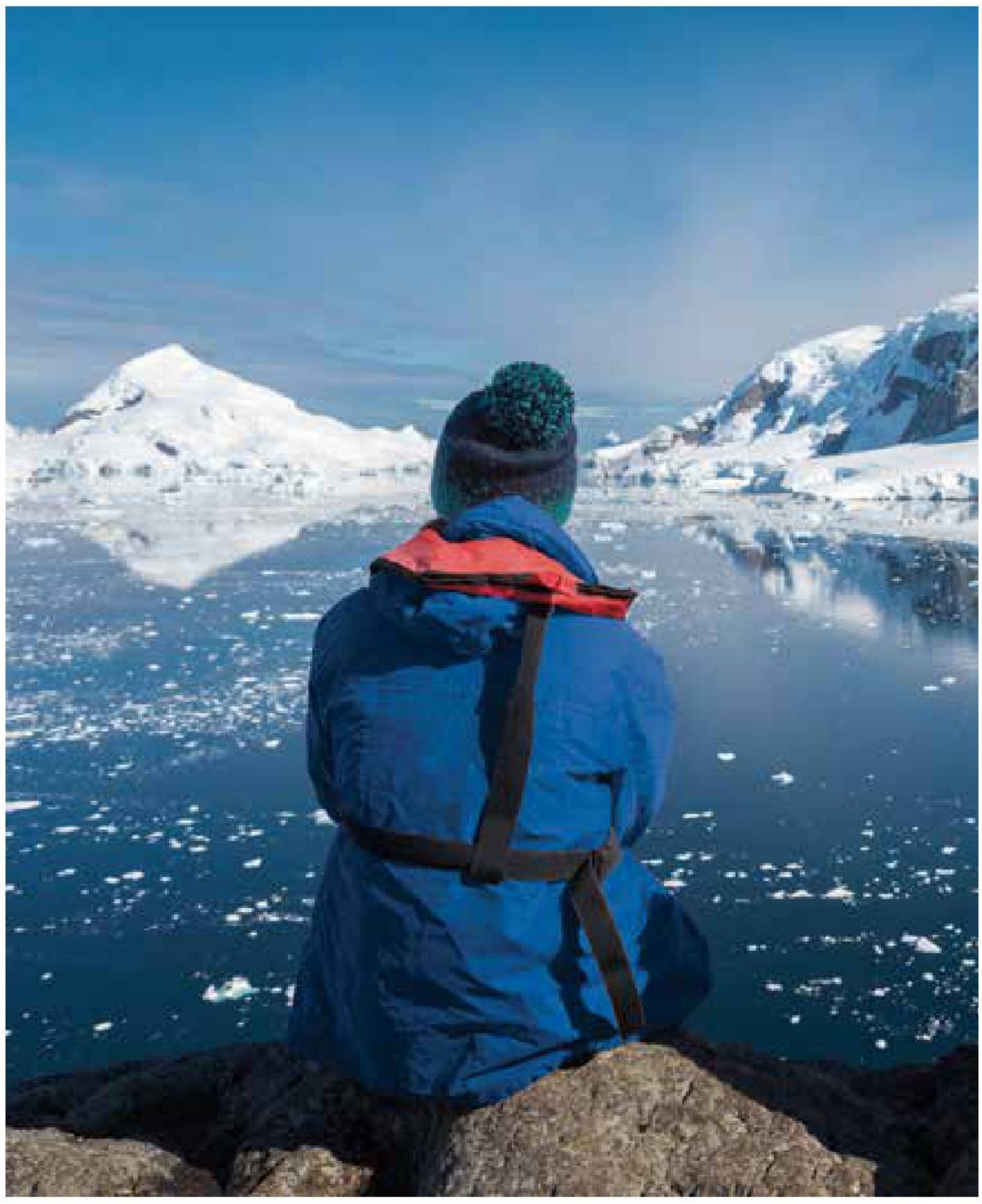


IMAGE: HAPAG-LLOYD CRUISES

ABOVE: Cruising the Antarctic

> "The ship's extendable glass balconies will allow passengers to perch directly above the waves"

Perhaps this year's most anticipated launch, however, is that of *Scenic Eclipse*, which bills itself as 'the world's first discovery yacht'. Due to set sail in August, the ultra-luxurious 200-passenger ship houses two on-board helicopters and a seven-seater submarine. "It's the next generation of luxury cruising offering unprecedented levels of discovery along with innovative, ground-breaking itineraries," says Colin Downing, the company's managing director.

Featuring fuel-efficient engines, advanced wastewater treatment systems, low-emission propulsion and GPS anchoring systems designed to minimise seabed damage, *Scenic Eclipse* will be among the most environmentally sensitive ships at sea. Such technologies — combined with top-notch comforts, minimal crowds and a sense of adventure — are positioning expedition cruises as the ultimate aquatic experience.

mundyadventures.co.uk crystalcruises.co.uk coralexpeditions.com hl-cruises.com scenic.co.uk **JL**

10 BEYOND THE B&B: LUXURY HOMESTAYS

When two San Francisco housemates rented out a number of inflatable mattresses in their living room in 2007, they unwittingly transformed the travel industry. AirBedandBreakfast.com, which later became Airbnb, launched the following year — and the rest is history. For years, Airbnb remained true to that founding spirit, offering a way for travellers to find cheap digs and homeowners and renters to make a bit of cash on the side. Its growth, meanwhile, spawned a now-burgeoning market within a market: the luxury homestay.

In 2010, London businessman Greg Marsh launched Onefinestay, adding a layer of luxury to the homestay model by offering the owners of upmarket accommodation a guest-vetting and management service. It kicked off with just six spots in London and now lists more than 10,000 high-end homes available to rent around the world. The emphasis here is on high-end: a five-bedroom townhouse in New York's Upper East Side, for instance, is listed at $4,400 (£3,429) a night.

Hotels and tourist boards have traditionally viewed homestays as a grave threat, but at the top end of the market, they're now sleeping — very comfortably — with the enemy. New luxury hotels tend to include serviced apartment options and large multinational companies are buying straight into the model. In 2016, the AccorHotels giant bought Onefinestay for more than $170m (£132m).

Other start-ups are following suit and wealthy homeowners are realising the potential in their properties. Sweet Inn, for example, a French-Israeli start-up launched in 2014, offers high-end apartment rental, with a local team on hand 24/7 to ensure smooth stays. London-based Plum Guide, meanwhile, raised £14m earlier this year with the aim of introducing its luxury homestay service to dozens more cities. As part of its service, Plum Guide deploys hospitality experts to road-test the properties on its books; its listings include a four-bedroom suite in a luxury Kensington development that can be yours for a mere £8,000 a night.

Perhaps late to adapt to the game it helped create, Airbnb quietly tested its own Luxe line in London earlier this year, two years after the company bought up Canadian startup Luxury Retreats, another high-end homestay player. It also unveiled Airbnb Plus last year, a vetted selection of high-design homes. The Luxe line promised 'extraordinary homes with five-star everything' and there are reportedly plans for expansion. Air mattresses are not included.

onefinestay.com sweetinn.com plumguide.com airbnb.co.uk/plus **SU**

ABOVE: Rue Barbet de Jouy V, Paris

IMAGE: ONE FINE STAY

LALUNA

GRENADA

LALUNA.COM

TRAVEL WRITING COMPETITION

FINAL CALL FOR ENTRIES!

TRAVEL WRITING COMPETITION 2019

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO WRITE FOR US?

It's not too late to enter our annual Travel Writing Competition. If you think your writing could grace the pages of *National Geographic Traveller* (UK), then we want to hear from you

Can't travel without a notebook? Always regaling friends and family with tales from far and wide? If the answer's yes, then our Travel Writing Competition might be right up your street. Now in its eighth year, it's the perfect chance for budding writers to have their work published in one of the UK's most prestigious travel magazines.

We're looking for 500 words on a travel experience you've found inspiring— it could be anything from a safari on the Serengeti to a seaside escape in Cornwall.

Your entry needs to capture the essence of *National Geographic Traveller* (UK): a strong sense of place, immersive experiences and authentic storytelling with flair and finesse. But time is running out — entries close on 8 July.

THE PRIZE

Courtesy of G Adventures, the winner will embark on an epic, eight-night trip across Southern Africa. This classic itinerary showcases some of the best the continent has to offer. You'll journey from Namibia, across Botswana and on to Zimbabwe on an authentic African adventure that takes in the elephants of Chobe National Park; San Bushmen in the Kalahari; the thundering roar of Victoria Falls; and the Okavango Delta, explored by dugout *mokoro* canoe. A knowledgeable chief experience officer will ensure your accommodation provides the most authentic experience possible, including camping beneath starry skies for a night you'll never forget. *gadventures.co.uk*

Entries close on 8 July 2019. Terms and conditions apply.
Enter online at ***nationalgeographic.co.uk/competitions***

TRAVEL GEEKS

ASK THE EXPERTS

NEED ADVICE FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP? ARE YOU AFTER RECOMMENDATIONS, TIPS AND GUIDANCE? THE TRAVEL GEEKS HAVE THE ANSWERS...

Q // My partner and I want to splash out on a safari for our 25th anniversary, but we want to keep it sustainable. Where should we stay?

First, consider the carbon footprint of your flight itinerary. According to the UN, airlines emit around 80% of travel industry-related greenhouse gas emissions, so a canny way to shrink your holiday's impact is to limit your time in the air and maximise your time in the wilderness. Avoid safaris which jet you off to Africa's farthest corners, camp-hopping every few days; instead, plan an extended stay in just one or two excellent parks and reserves within reach of an accessible hub. Nairobi, under nine hours from London, is a good choice.

It's also worth looking for tours, camps and lodges that benefit rural communities, as well as showcasing and conserving habitats and wildlife. In the quieter reaches of Kenya's Maasai Mara — a superb region for antelopes, giraffes and big cats — Basecamp Explorer runs down-to-earth safari camps that have won multiple awards for their commitment to community wellbeing. At the camp, you can enjoy small-group activities such as walks with Maasai guides, nature drives, storytelling and stargazing. If you love sleek, modern comforts, you'll appreciate Sanctuary Olonana, a luxurious lodge on the Mara River with a resident naturalist, organic garden, wastewater recycling system and an active philanthropy programme. For some alternative, yet still eco-friendly options, have a look at the Ecotourism Kenya website.

If you're searching for a truly wild adventure, however, it's hard to beat a walking safari, fly-camping with an expert team that — when it's time to move on — dismantles each campsite making sure you're leaving no trace. In northern Tanzania, Alex Walker's Serian offers vegetarian-friendly walking safaris in a pristine part of the Serengeti that few tourists get to visit, while Dorobo Safaris, which won gold at the 2019 African Responsible Tourism Awards, offers trips through the Yaeda Valley, further south. You'll be accompanied by Hadza bushman guides, skilled in bushlore such as tracking wild animals on foot and foraging for water, honey, baobab fruit and berries. *basecampexplorer.com sanctuaryretreats.com ecotourismkenya.org serian.com dorobosafaris.com* **EMMA GREGG**

IMAGES: GETTY

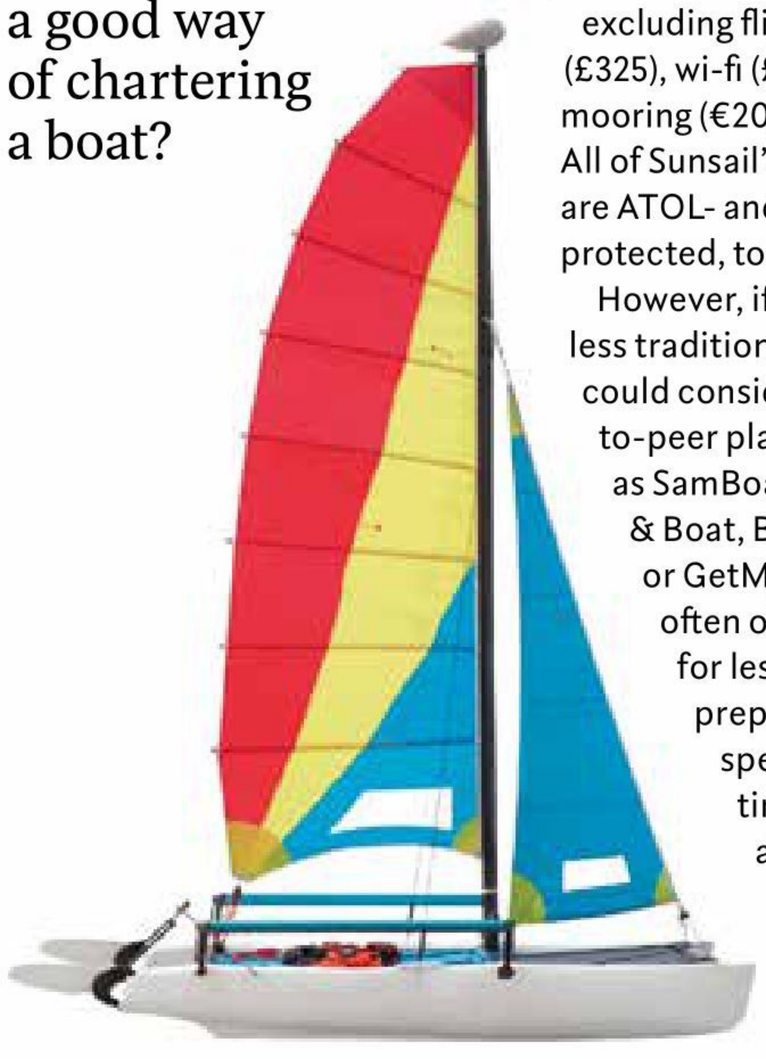
Q // I’m heading off to climb Ethiopia’s Simien Mountains and would like to get some altitude training in beforehand. What can you recommend?

Like any training programme, there are many ways to go about this. Grantley Hall in Yorkshire — opening this summer — is a new country house hotel that has two altitude-enabled bedrooms, allowing you to try out sleeping at up to 16,400ft. Extended periods of time spent at this altitude help to generate the red blood cells your body needs to cope with the lack of oxygen. Furthermore, there are three altitude-enabled training rooms where you can change the pressure to simulate an atmosphere up to 18,865ft on a rowing machine, static bike or even an underwater treadmill, all under the supervision of an expert personal training team who focus on expeditions rather than slimming programmes. The director, for example, holds two Guinness World Records for his adventurous rowing exploits.

Alternatively, the Altitude Centre in London offers drop — in classes and expert advice. Its host of approaches ranges from cycling at altitude to mountaineering consultations where one-hour appointments offer up insights, tips and advice alongside a health review to see how you’ll respond to low oxygen levels. *grantleyhall.co.uk altitudecentre.com*

JOSEPHINE PRICE

Q // I’d like to go sailing around the Mediterranean with a group of friends. What’s a good way of chartering a boat?



A simple solution could be to go with Sunsail — they have a three-berth, 14-metre monohull bareboat (without skipper) charter from the Greek island of Lefkas from £4,635 for six people including yacht and insurance, excluding flights, fuel (£325), wi-fi (£126) and mooring (€20/£17.53). All of Sunsail’s packages are ATOL- and ABTA-protected, too.

However, if you want a less traditional route, you could consider a peer-to-peer platform such as SamBoat.com, Click & Boat, Boatsetter or GetMyBoat. They often offer more for less, if you’re prepared to spend some time shopping around.

Click & Boat, for example, has more than 30,000 boats in over 50 countries with rentals from £49 a day for a small sailing boat to €250,000 (£219,086) for a 52-metre superyacht for a week. To rent, you simply need to pick a location, boat, date and duration. After approval by the owner, you then need to register to book, and pay a deposit. If you plan to captain the boat yourself, you need to prove your boating qualifications (such as an ICC certificate or equivalent).

If you want a little more luxury, Click & Boat recommends the latest trend — renting a catamaran. They’re typically spacious, speedy and ideal for an island-hopping trip around the Mediterranean. Prices range from €1,000 (£878) to €2,000 (£1,756) per day for a luxury 40-42ft catamaran. *sunsail.co.uk samboat.com clickandboat.com boatsetter.com getmyboat.co.uk*

SAM LEWIS

Q // I have a long flight to Brisbane coming up and don’t have much time to recover when I land. What should I take with me on the plane to make sure I arrive looking fresh?

You don’t need an excessive, in-air beauty regime but, alongside loads of anti-bac and probiotics to ward off the inevitable plane-induced cold, there are a few steps you can take to land feeling as human as possible.

First, ply your skin with moisture before the air con starts to suck it away again. If you don’t mind looking a little silly, a sheet mask is most effective. I adore La Mer’s The Treatment Lotion Hydrating Masks. They’re pricey (£120 for a box of six), but are drenched in nourishing serum, and few things perk up plane-face quite like them. Alternatively, coat your skin in a heavy-handed layer of a hyaluronic acid-infused serum, like The Ordinary’s.

After landing, use a big cotton pad to wipe Kiehl’s Herbal Infused Micellar Cleansing Water over your entire face to gather up lingering plane grime. You’ll feel like you’re at a festival, but it’s the closest you’ll get to feeling clean until you can find a shower. Finally, you need a face mist. Nothing wakes you up like a bracing spritz of Dr Dennis Gross C+ Collagen Mist. It contains Vitamin C and antioxidants. **SHANNON PETER**

THE EXPERTS

EMMA GREGG // CONTRIBUTOR, *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER* (UK)

SAM LEWIS // CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER* (UK)

JOSEPHINE PRICE // ONLINE EDITOR, *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER* (UK)

SHANNON PETER // BEAUTY EDITOR, *STYLIST*

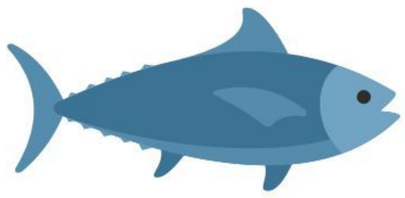
THE INFO

EXTRAVAGANT EATS

FROM THE INTRICATELY MADE TO THE EXTORTIONATE, HERE'S OUR PICK OF THE DISHES AND DRINKS THAT FIGHT TO DEFINE INDULGENCE. WORDS: NICOLA TRUP

5

The number of years' training it typically takes to become an *itamae* (professional sushi chef).



£2.5m

The record-breaking amount paid by Japanese sushi tycoon Kiyoshi Kimura for a 278kg tuna at Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market earlier this year.

3

The number of Michelin stars held by Sukiyabashi Jiro, the 10-seater Tokyo sushi restaurant whose chef starred in the documentary *Jiro Dreams of Sushi.*

£1,560

The price of the world's most expensive pizza, served at Industry Kitchen in New York. Toppings include foie gras, caviar, truffle and 24-carat gold leaves.

The longest-ever tasting menu involved **200 courses** being served over 24 hours in September 2015, with only four diners staying the duration. **The 200 Club** event took place in London and was priced at **£1,000 per ticket**.

The world's biggest consumers of champagne

(by the bottle, in 2018)

TAKE THREE

COCKTAILS NAMED AFTER PEOPLE

BELLINI
Invented at Harry's Bar in Venice, this prosecco and peach number takes its name from 15th-century artist Giovanni Bellini, who once painted in a similar colour.

MARY PICKFORD
When silent film actress Pickford was working in Havana, a barman invented this mix of rum, pineapple juice, grenadine and maraschino liqueur for her.

GINGER ROGERS
Another drink dedicated to an actress, this one is a fiery combination of gin, lemon juice, ginger ale, ginger-pepper syrup and fresh mint.

IMAGES: GETTY. SOURCES: GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS; MICHELIN GUIDE; YOUMESUSHI.COM; BBC NEWS; BOMBASANDPARR.COM; CHAMPAGNE.COM

HOT TOPIC

DO WE NEED A 'GREEN TAX' ON AIR TRAVEL?

WITH AVIATION GENERATING MUCH OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, WE LOOK AT WHAT THE INDUSTRY, THE GOVERNMENT AND WE AS CONSUMERS CAN DO TO REDUCE THE DAMAGE TO OUR PLANET. WORDS: JAMES DRAVEN

"If aviation were a country," says Justin Francis, founder of ethical tour operator, Responsible Travel, "it would be the world's seventh largest emitter of CO2."

It's for this reason Responsible Travel is campaigning for a global tax on our flights, called the Green Flying Duty, with the proceeds ring-fenced for research into carbon-free aviation. Francis says raising fares by 10% will reduce demand for flights by up to 15%, and believes the solution to the climate crisis is for us to travel less often, less far.

Philip Allport, director of communications at Norwegian, disagrees: "Aviation is already one of the most heavily taxed industries in the world and adding an additional tax burden will negatively impact both consumers and the global industries aviation supports."

Responsible Travel counters this: "Aviation fuel is untaxed. The government charges Air Passenger Duty (APD), but at a much lower level than fuel tax. Airlines would pay £10bn if aviation was taxed at the same rate as petrol. Even with the £3.4bn raised through APD, this makes the subsidy, for a very polluting industry, £6.6bn per year — or £240 for every UK household. We propose increasing APD to a level that would reduce demand for aviation."

Benjamin Ryan, chief commercial officer of Air North, Yukon's Airline, points out: "Any policy initiatives that drive up the cost of flights will prohibit those with low incomes from flying." Global travel would become the preserve of the wealthy again.

"That's right," agrees Francis, "it's a shame, but we have to try to halt the devastation of global warming."

Responsible Travel hopes those hit hardest by price hikes will swap flights for staycations and rail travel, and those who do still fly will choose to take fewer, longer holidays, thus reducing the number of flights.

Unfortunately this flies in the face of consumer trends according to Thomas Cook's 2019 Holiday Report, which states customers are increasingly booking shorter trips to long-haul destinations to maximise their annual leave quota.

"This [type of travel] is completely inconsistent with what's needed," counters Francis.

We also have to ask if heavy taxes on air travel could drive airlines and tour operators out of business, and negatively impact countless tourist destinations.

"The environment is more important than the success of some businesses," says Francis. "Tourism can't survive in a world of water shortages and climate migration. If climate change gets out of control we'd see a 5-20% reduction in global GDP. That would crush the tourism industry."

Q&A

SHOULD WE FLY LESS?

Benjamin Ryan of Air North, Yukon's Airline says: "Reduced demand could lead to higher pricing and airlines using less fuel-efficient equipment."

WHAT ABOUT BIOFUELS?

Norwegian's Philip Allport says: "As it stands, biofuels are still very expensive and produced on a scale that doesn't match requirements."

AREN'T THERE BETTER WAYS TO REDUCE EMISSIONS?

Ryan says: "Optimising the flow of planes around airports during approach and departure is critical to reducing emissions when fuel consumption is high."

WHAT ABOUT CARBON OFFSET SCHEMES INSTEAD OF TAXATION?

Vicki Brown from Responsible Travel states: "Uptake rates for voluntary offset schemes are historically low and consumers can feel they provide a 'guilt-free' way to travel."

AND ANOTHER THING... EXPEDITION CRUISE LAUNCHES

HYBRID HURTIGRUTEN

The world's first ice-class, hybrid-powered expedition ship, *Roald Amundsen,* launches this summer, solely powered by renewable biogas made from dead fish and organic waste. *hurtigruten.co.uk*

PURPOSE-BUILT

Aurora Expedition's *Greg Mortimer* will be launching in October 2019 as the company's first purpose-built expedition vessel. It will be built to polar standard. *auroraexpeditions.com*

PARTICULARLY POLAR

Lindblad Expeditions will launch *National Geographic Endurance* next year, its first polar-specific ship with the highest ice class of any purpose-built passenger vessel. *world.expeditions.com*

DESTINATION READY

Silversea will be launching *Silver Origin* in summer 2020. Their first destination-specific ship to launch, designed specifically for trips around the Galapagos Islands. *silversea.com*

IMAGE: GETTY

Kit list

LUXURY CITY BREAK IN MIAMI

PACK SMARTER — AND LIGHTER — WITH A KIT LIST THAT HAS EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR THE PERFECT TRIP TO SOUTH FLORIDA'S BIGGEST CITY

1 ANTLER JUNO METALLICS MEDIUM SUITCASE IN OPAL
Antler's latest offering launches this summer. Its aluminium flake finish gives it a shiny, polished look, but substance hasn't been compromised — it's strong, scratch-resistant and super lightweight. RRP: £179. *antler.co.uk*

2 JASPER CONRAN TRAVEL WALLET
Available in three colours, this travel wallet is part of Jasper Conran's new collection of accessories. There are pockets to keep your travel documents safe, plus a travel mirror. RRP: £780. *jasperconranshop.com*

3 LARQ SELF-CLEANING WATER BOTTLE
With a normal mode and adventure mode, this bottle uses UV light to purify water at the push of a button, turning itself on every two hours to keep the water clean and free of germs. RRP: £95. *livelarq.com*

4 SEAFOLLY OCEAN ALLEY MIDI-DRESS
This summer-friendly floaty midi-dress comes from Seafolly, Australia's largest swimwear brand. It's made from a linen and cotton blend and features kimono sleeves to keep you cool from city to shore. RRP: £100. *selfridges.com*

5 CHRISTOPHER WARD C7 APEX
This limited-edition venture from Christopher Ward marks the luxury brand's fifth anniversary. It's a little futuristic, with a stripped-back aesthetic to showcase the Calibre SH21 interior, and has a five-day power reserve. RRP: £2,995. *christopherward.co.uk*

6 RIZ RECYCLED PLASTIC SWIM SHORTS
Riz creates swim shorts entirely out of plastic bottles in an effort to turn the tide on ocean pollution. These ones are new this summer. RRP: £110. *rizboardshorts.com*

Read more in our Neighbourhood: Miami feature on P.67

Three for the beach

KALEOS CASWELL SUNGLASSES
Monochrome with a tortoiseshell laminate
RRP: £150.
kaleoscollection.com

MUDU THE GIBSON PANAMA HAT
Sizes tailored to order — ideal for seeking some extra shade
RRP: £128.
mudu.co.uk

MAAJI MARACUJA SWIMSUIT
Made in Colombia with built-in UV protection
RRP: £106.
maaji.co

Tech traveller

TECHNOLOGY REPORTER FOR @BBCCLICK AND AUTHOR OF *WORKING THE CLOUD* KATE RUSSELL PICKS THE LATEST INNOVATIONS

SMART LUGGAGE

MAKE MORE OF YOUR LUGGAGE WITH HIGH-TECH GADGETS AND GIZMOS THAT CAN BOOST THE SECURITY OF YOUR LUGGAGE — AND THE EASE OF HANDLING IT

If you want to really travel easier and safer there's a lot of choice in the smart suitcase market, with tech upgrades ranging from battery packs and trackers to unbreakable shells and weighing scales. We looked at the G-RO carry-on (£350 / $449) last year, and it remains a good-looking pick. The battery pack pops out to comply with airline policies about stowing lithium batteries in the hold, and the 'gravity roll' wheels can handle all terrains. A more affordable option if you want extra battery power is Away The Carry On (£225), which features an ejectable battery, TSA-approved combination lock, swivel wheels and an unbreakable polycarbonate shell. If you're looking for the personal touch, the Horizn Studios M5 (£320) includes a free 12-month trial with Horizn GO assistant, a virtual travel assistant service for booking flights and hotels that will also suggest trips tailored to your preferences. There's the obligatory removable battery pack too. At the top end of the scale is Planet Traveler's SC1 suitcase (£1,246 / $1,599, but currently on sale for £623 / $799). The removable battery gives 225 hours of charging and the robotic lock opens with your fingerprint. Throw in a digital scale, global tracker and even a speaker and you have a suitcase that's smarter than most. If you're just too lazy to carry your suitcase how about riding on it instead? The Modobag ($1,495 / £1,165) is a motorised suitcase that turns into a kind of sit-on scooter. It rolls at a speed of up to 8mph, steered via its telescopic handlebars, and can travel up to six miles on a single charge of its removable battery. It is, however, on the heavy side at 20lbs when empty.

GET THE GADGET

Bose Noise-Masking Sleepbuds

Get a luxurious night's sleep on your flight with these noise-masking earbuds from up-market audio equipment manufacturer Bose. Wireless and designed for comfort, they don't have any noise-cancelling technology, but instead come pre-loaded with 10 soothing audio tracks to relax you and cover any unwanted external sounds.

Whether you fall asleep to the sounds of a cascading waterfall, crackling fireplace or raindrops falling in the forest, the sounds are stored on the earbuds via an app, allowing you to switch off your phone completely to conserve its battery. You can even set an alarm on the earbuds, so you don't oversleep and miss breakfast. RRP: £229.95. *bose.co.uk*

IMAGE: GETTY

@katerussell
katerussell.co.uk

TOP APPS FOR... *buddying up*

TRAVELLO

IOS/ANDROID FREE

Backpackers, solo travellers and digital nomads can connect with each other, building a tailored community. *travelloapp.com*

FLIP THE TRIP

IOS FREE

This social app connects around 43,000 like-minded travellers in more than 4,500 cities. Use it to find a travel buddy or meet locals interested in showing you around. *flipthetrip.com*

BTRFLYLOUNGE

IOS/ANDROID FREE

Get social in the airport and connect with other users by airport or flight number. *btrfly.net*

SHIP MATE

IOS/ANDROID FREE

Planning a big cruise? This app will help you get social with other passengers, keep track of itineraries and access ship and tourism information along your route. *shipmateapp.com*

FREQUENT FLYER

AIRPORT LOUNGES: HOW TO GET IN THE DOOR

AIRPORT LOUNGES PROMISE TO BRING A LITTLE OF THE LUXURY AIR TRAVEL WAS ONCE ASSOCIATED WITH, BUT DO YOU STILL NEED TO BE A VIP TO GET ACCESS? RORY BOLAND, EDITOR OF WHICH? TRAVEL, REVEALS ALL

I'm not a 'somebody'. Can I just pay to get in?

Not to the best ones. The lounges you really want access to are run by the airlines — they tend to be a lot better than the airport lounges run by independent companies. British Airways and Virgin Atlantic are the UK carriers with the most locations. But you can't just slip them £20 at the door and march in. You'll either need to book a business- or first-class ticket, or be a member of their frequent flyer schemes, unfortunately.

So, frequent-flyer status is better than an airline credit card?

Correct. Even flashing a British Airways or Virgin Atlantic-branded credit card won't get you inside. Instead, aim to join a carrier's frequent flyer scheme.

You'll need to become a Silver Executive Club Member with British Airways, which requires 600 tier points. The bad news? Flying economy won't get you far. You'd need to fly return between London and New York City 15 times (in a year) to hit 600 points. And you'd need to love the Big Apple even more with Virgin — it'd take 20 economy-class flights to get the Gold status you need for lounge access.

However, there are shortcuts. Look for business-class promotions, which earn more tier points. For example, four Club Europe return tickets with British Airways on European routes could cost from £1,200 collectively and would instantly get you into the Silver Club. Frequent flyer website Head for Points lists promotions.

But don't reach for the scissors just yet; your credit card could still get you into an airport lounge.

Are you downgrading me?

Not necessarily. While airline lounges are usually more polished than those run by private companies at the airport, that's not always the case. Undercover inspectors from *Which? Travel* rated the British Airways Galleries Club Lounge at Heathrow Terminal 5 three stars out of five — exactly the same score as the Plaza Premium pay-to-enter airport lounge in the same terminal.

Pay to enter, you say?

Exactly. The Plaza Premium costs £40 for one-off access, for example. But don't cough up until you've checked those reviews. There's a lounge in almost every UK airport, usually run by Aspire or No1, but of the 21 inspected by Which?, less than half managed a three-star rating.

You told me not to cut up my credit card

That's right. Some credit cards, like the American Express Platinum Card and United MileagePlus Club Card, include access to airport lounges, as do some packaged bank accounts, like the Barclays Travel Pack (six visits).

But do your sums first. The American Express Platinum Card has an annual fee of £450 while Barclays Travel Pack accounts cost £126. With lounges charging around £30 for each visit, you'd need to fly fairly frequently to get good value for money. And if it's just regular lounge access you're interested in, then a membership card might make more sense.
Read more: *which.co.uk*

AIRPORT LOUNGE MEMBERSHIP CLUBS: ARE THEY WORTH JOINING?

You'll need to be a regular flyer. Priority Pass is the best-known airport lounge membership scheme and it charges £339 for unlimited access. That promises you entry to 1,200 lounges worldwide run by the likes of Aspire and No 1. More realistic is its 'standard membership', which costs £179 for 10 visits.

Other schemes include DragonPass, which has around 1,000 airport lounge locations and offers basic membership for £68. For that you get one free entry and subsequent visits cost £19.50 each.

You can also sign up to loyalty schemes run by the airport lounge brands themselves. Aspire , which has the most lounges in UK airports, has a rewards programme built into its app. Each entry earns you points and you'll need anywhere from seven to eight paid visits to gain one free entry.

IMAGE: GETTY

HAINAN AIRLINES
ALL ABOARD

The airline's new 787-9 Dreamliner features 'Dream Feather' interiors and a new Premium Economy class

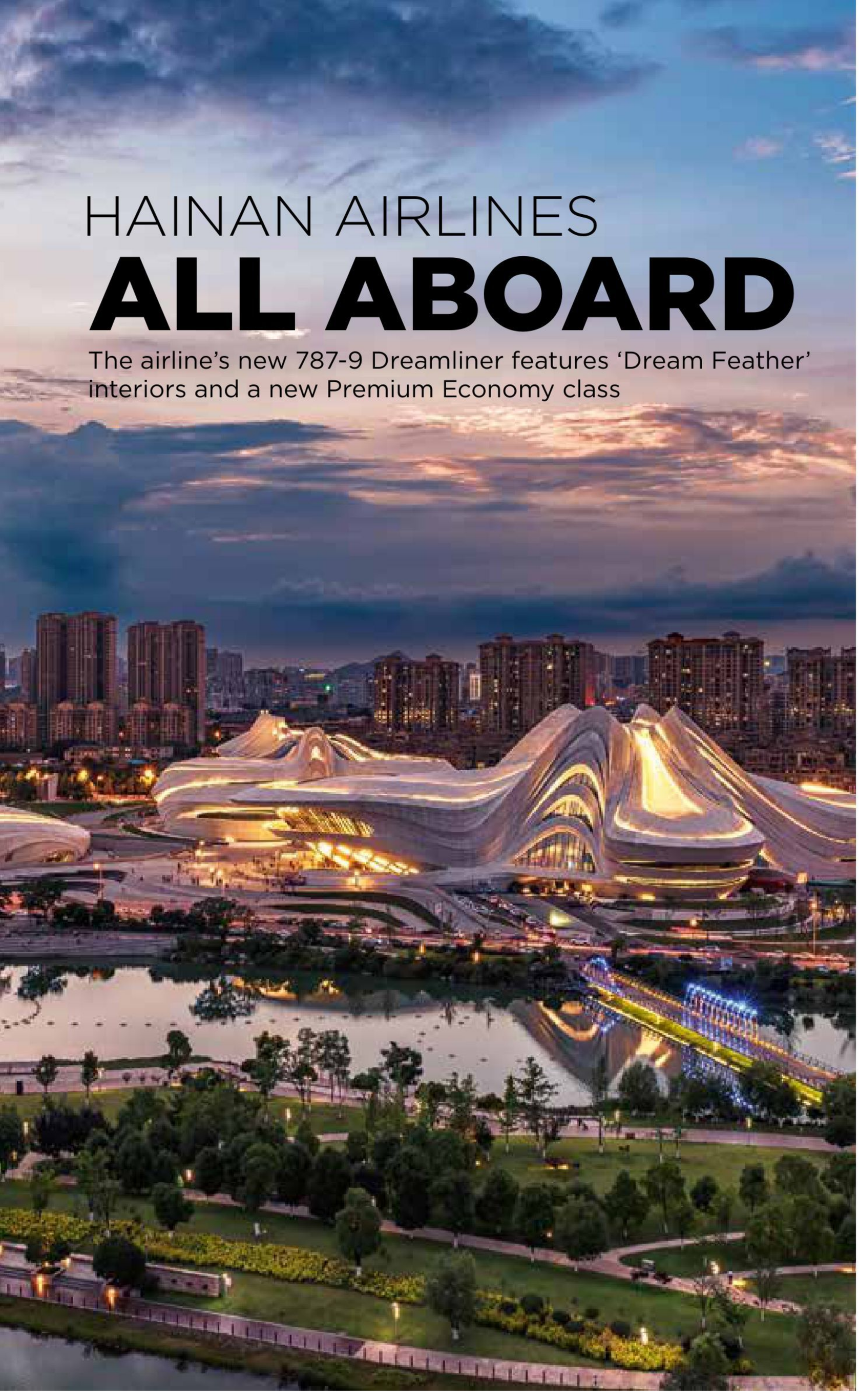


IMAGE: GETTY

Cutting-edge design

UK-based PriestmanGoode has reworked interiors to ensure utmost comfort on board. Updates include the installation of leather headrests — a first for Hainan Airlines — and a layer of sponge beneath the fabric. The 'Dream Feather' concept incorporates an image of a floating feather to reflect the ease and comfort of stress-free travel.

Entertain yourself

New cabins feature state-of-the-art 'Hai Studio' hardware and the latest Panasonic EX3 entertainment system, with 18-inch, 1080P HD screens in business, 13-inch in premium economy and 12-inch in economy.

Sit back & relax

Business class has high-end Super Diamond flat seats from Rockwell Collins, with privacy screens, extra leg space and a 46-inch seat pitch. The new Premium Economy class offers four-way head restraints, seat backs reclining up to seven inches, an iPad bracket and a power plug. Economy features the Recaro CL3710 seat, with a newspaper holder — adding an inch of leg room.

Top 5 Chinese cities to explore with Hainan Airlines

Beijing
The world's most populous capital oozes history with its Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven and Great Wall of China.

Shenzhen
This metropolis is home to Luohu Commercial City, where shops sell everything from electronics to tailored suits.

Changsha
Historical treasures include Mawangdui Han Tombs, a graveyard from the Han Dynasty, and the Hunan Provincial Museum.

Chengdu
UNESCO's first 'City of Gastronomy' is famous for Chinese tea ceremonies, Sichuan cuisine and giant pandas.

Chongqing
The 'Mountain City' is the place to enjoy a scenic cruise to see charming river valleys and visit hot spring parks.

Essentials

With codeshare partner airlines, Hainan Airlines offers services from Manchester Airport (MAN), Heathrow (LHR) and Edinburgh (EDI) to more than 50 destinations around the world.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Full of superlative landscapes and age-old Andean traditions, Peru endures as one of South America's most captivating countries. In our next issue, we get to its very heart and discover everything from its legendary Incan settlements to its booming gastronomy

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IMAGE: GETTY

THE NEW PHILANTHROPISTS?

THESE DAYS, LUXURY TRAVEL IS AS MUCH ABOUT HANDS-ON ENGAGEMENT WITH A DESTINATION AS IT IS OPULENT ESCAPISM, AND INCREASINGLY THAT MEANS CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY. WORDS: FRANCISCA KELLETT

The smell of burning rhino horn is exactly the same as the smell of burning human hair. I know this because I've helped a vet cut the horn off a live rhino with a chainsaw. This sounds brutal, but dehorning has become common practice in Africa. Cut off the horn, the thinking goes, and the critically endangered rhino is devalued; there's nothing left to poach. It's working, too. In Phinda Private Game Reserve, in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal, they've not lost a rhino in two years.

"We decided to turn our experiences inside out, letting guests take part in what we're doing at the community and conservation level," Joss Kent, the CEO of &Beyond, which runs 29 lodges around the world, tells me.

These trips are one of a new slew of luxury philanthropic experiences that let guests get their hands dirty for a good cause, in between sampling the finer things in life. They might help collar lions, take part in cheetah tracking for a breeding project, or de-horn a rhino (the horns grow back). The idea is to allow a deeper understanding of how a game reserve works, with money raised going towards funding projects.

But that deeper understanding comes at a price. These trips with &Beyond cost US$8,800 (£6,900) per person for six nights. The company also offers translocation trips with safari tour operator Great Plains Conservation to capture and move rhinos from South Africa to poaching-free Botswana. Each trip is tailor-made for particular donors, with prices on request. There's a long waiting list.

"We're definitely seeing a shift from passive observation to a more participative experience with a sense of purpose," Kent explains. "And we've found that many guests become lifelong donors."

Ted Turner, the founder of CNN and owner of Ted Turner Reserves, agrees. "There are more people out there today who want to travel with purpose instead of just lying on a beach somewhere," he tells me.

Turner is the second-largest private landowner in the US, his reserves covering 585,000 acres in New Mexico and Colorado and incorporating nine luxurious lodges including Ladder Ranch, which guests can take over from $2,200 (£1,725) a night. Teams of scientists have been gradually rewilding these former cattle farms, tearing down fences and reintroducing endangered species such as bighorn sheep, black bears and bison. "We help our guests understand that it's because of the conservation efforts that they're able to hike some of the most beautiful trails in the US," says Turner.

Luke Bailes, founder and CEO of luxury safari operator Singita, says it's the access and experiences travellers are looking for. "There's a new breed of philanthropist genuinely worried about the state of the world. It's the experience they're looking for, not the luxury."

IMAGE: GETTY

PUGLIA
THE BEST OF THE COAST

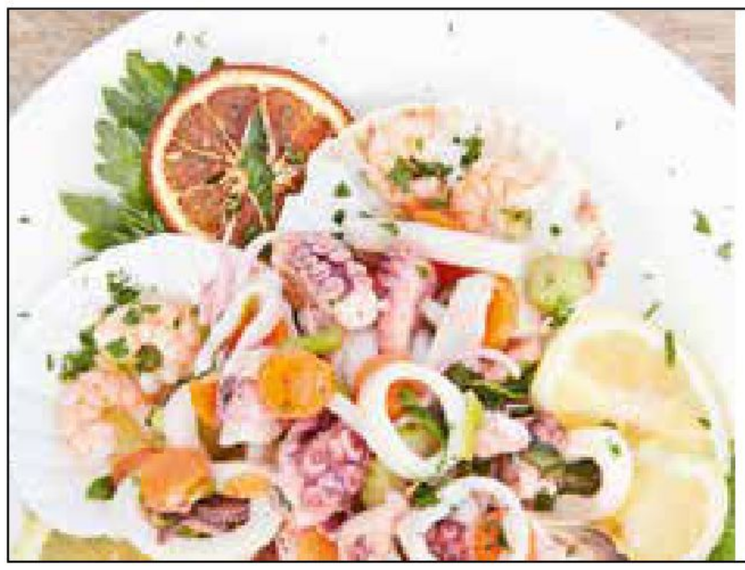
From postcard-perfect towns and ancient fortresses to white-sand beaches and warm seas, the coast of this bucolic Italian region has it all

BEST FOR... CLASSIC PUGLIA
Polignano a Mare
This ancient town, famed for its seafood and *cono tuffato* (ice cream plopped into whipped cream), is reached through the Porta Vecchia gate, which leads to a maze of whitewashed streets. Further afield, explore the region's rugged coastline and hidden coves hemmed in by limestone cliffs.

BEST FOR... HISTORY
Otranto
Watched over by an imposing fortress, this dramatic seaside town has fought off its fair share of foreign invasions over the centuries. The ancient city centre's streets are steeped in atmosphere — listen to tales of the infamous Turkish massacre in 1480, and see the bones of 800 martyrs displayed behind an altar in the 12th-century cathedral.

BEST FOR... WATERSPORTS
Vieste
The Adriatic sea here is billed as the cleanest in Italy, with watersports one of the main attractions. Sail or kayak along the coast to explore sea caves, karst mountains and Tremiti islands or kitesurf and windsurf the stretch between Peschici and Vieste. Inland, the Foresta Umbra has plenty of hiking trails in the shade of ancient forests.

BEST FOR... BEACHES
Monopoli
Dozens of sandy beaches and hidden coves surround this seaside town, dominated by the 16th-century castle and its cathedral. Picturesque white houses in the Old Town overlook the Venetian old port, teeming with brightly coloured fishing boats and waterfront trattorias serving delicious fish dishes and other Apulian classics.



BEST FOR... SEAFOOD
Gallipoli
Stay here and the sea will always be at your door; the photogenic Città Vecchia (historical centre) of Gallipoli is located on an island, connected to the mainland by a bridge. Seafood, not surprisingly, is a big attraction here, with squid, octopus and scorpionfish often featuring on local menus.

Essentials

Getting there: Ryanair flies direct from Stansted to Bari. Other airlines — including Alitalia, Lufthansa and EasyJet — also fly to Bari and Brindisi with connections in Europe.

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IMAGES: RICHARD JAMES TAYLOR

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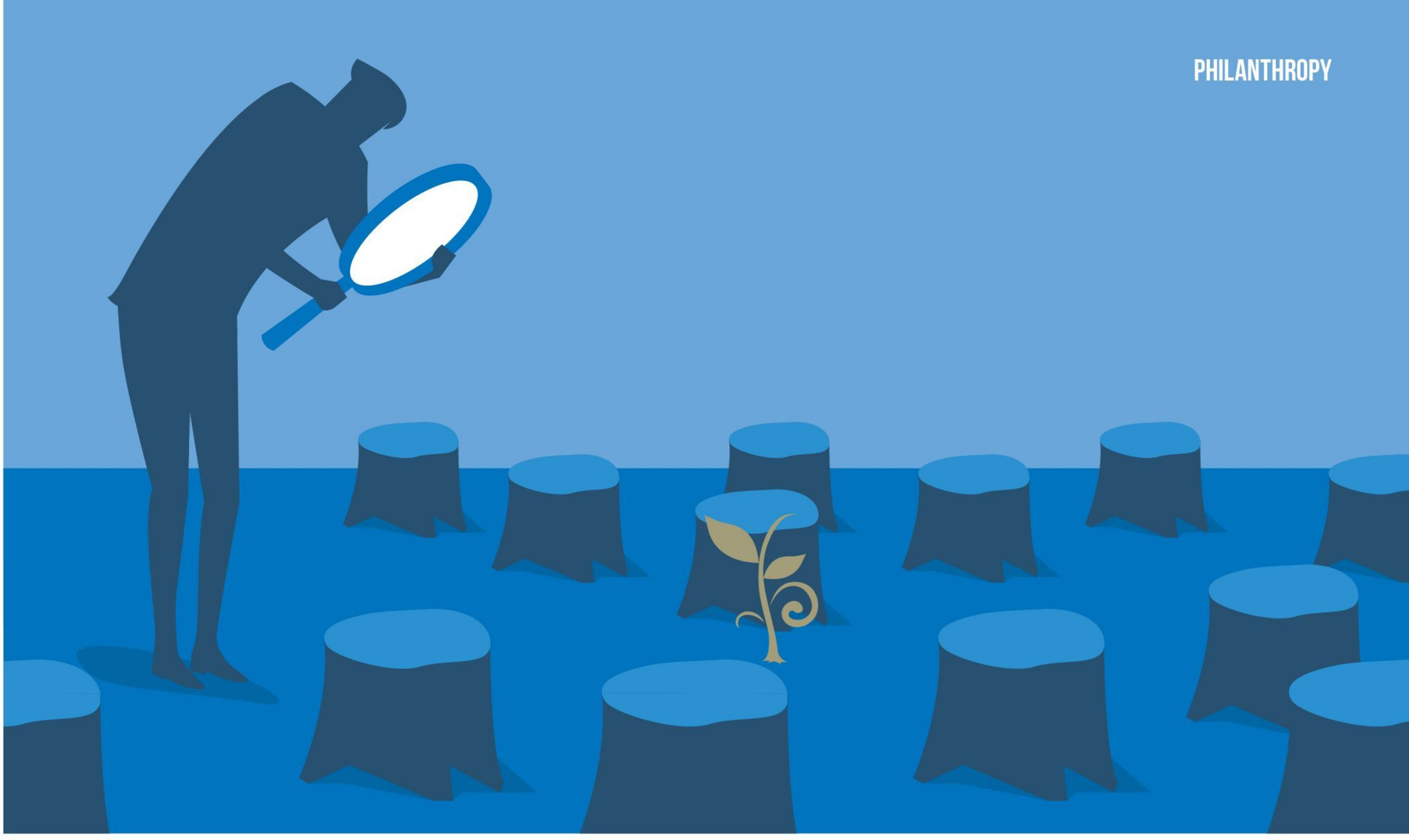

The luxury probably helps, though. Singita is known for running some of the most opulent lodges in Africa. A one-night stay at Singita Sasakwa Lodge in Singita Grumeti, fringing Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, costs from US$1,234 (£967). A-listers love it (former guests have included the Clooneys, the Beckhams, Oprah Winfrey and Natalie Portman) and visitors can expect beautiful rooms, manicured grounds, a private vehicle and guide, superb food and an incredible wine cellar.

Filling the void

The idea behind all this luxury is a high-yield, low-impact model that sees private companies charge a hefty fee for a very luxurious experience, limiting the number of visitors and thereby minimising the impact on the land. It's essentially a way of funding work previously done by governments and NGOs.

Singita now calls itself a 'conservation company', not a travel company; conservation has been at the forefront of the brand from early on. Part-funded by US hedge fund billionaire Paul Tudor Jones, Singita operates 12 lodges, protecting over a million acres of land in Africa. Tudor Jones first partnered with Singita 15 years ago, after buying the rights to various concessions in an area of Tanzania that had been hard hit by unregulated hunting. Working with local communities to reduce poaching, fund education and offer jobs and training, the results have been impressive and wildlife is thriving: for example, there's been a tenfold rise in the buffalo population; 16-fold in the case of lions; and fourfold in the case of elephants.

"Educating local communities is key," Singita's Bailes tells me. "Giving them alternative forms of livelihoods, increasing the regional economy."

Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo faces very particular challenges when it comes to the local community. Africa's oldest national park is at risk from thousands of armed militias — and the illegal charcoal trade they support — in the surrounding area. The park recently reopened, following the kidnapping of two tourists and the murder of a ranger last year, with a huge conservation initiative driven by park director Emmanuel de Merode, who also happens to be a Belgian prince. While the immediate aim of the park is to protect its natural heritage and the rare lowland gorillas that live there, de Merode has said its "higher mission" is to create employment and bring stability to a war-torn and impoverished corner of DRC. The goal is to create 100,000 jobs for locals by 2022.

So employment is crucial. Generating tourism jobs, which require a high level of training, creates not only income but value and a reason for local support of a conservation initiative.

The Long Run, a membership organisation of nature-based tourism businesses, has gone so far as to include commercial success in its core values. Its members pledge to four 'Cs': conservation, community, culture and commerce. Launched by Jochen Zeitz, the billionaire former CEO of Puma, Long Run members currently protect 13 million acres of biodiversity. The goal is to conserve 20 million acres and improve the lives of two million people by 2020. All members strive to provide luxurious experiences that benefit the environment and locals — but they also need to make money to ensure long-term viability.

"The Long Run gives us ideas and guides us on what more we can do," Michael Lutzeyer, the owner of Grootbos in South Africa, explains (see side panel, next page). His lodge is also part of National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World, which has stringent sustainability markers — Grootbos is, for example, plastic-free and carbon neutral.

Beyond the buzz words

The trend for sustainable travel, or travel that has a positive impact, has gained marketing traction. 'Sustainability' and 'conservation' have become buzzwords, and greenwashing — where companies make misleading claims about their environmental credentials — can be a problem. Claiming a luxury hotel pool is made from recycled tiles is all well and good, for example, but when that hotel is unwilling to cut its plastic use or employ locally, it rings hollow.

One way of ensuring your tourist pounds are going in the right direction is by booking via a tour operator with a philanthropic slant. The Explorations Company, founded by Nicola Shepherd, charges £200 per booking, which is matched by the company. This fee goes to support projects that benefit the host community. Shepherd encourages her clients to visit a philanthropic project during their trip. "We find out what our clients are passionate about," she says. The Explorations Company's latest initiative, Philanthropy Plus, includes a surcharge of at least 5% of the cost a trip, to be funnelled into a cause close to the client's heart.

The flamboyant US hotelier and designer Bill Bensley has built his new lodge, Shinta Mani Wild in Cambodia, specifically to protect the land around it. The luxury tented camp is on a 400-acre wildlife corridor that spans Bokor and Kirirom National Parks, which is now protected from poaching, mining and logging.

"Ideally, we could put up a big Trumpian wall around the park, and not let anyone in or out," Bensley explains. "That would allow this wildness to regenerate in the quickest possible way. But Trump ain't here, so policing, with a

IMAGE: GETTY

sustainable income from rich people staying in tents as a privileged few, might be an answer." It's the high-yield, low-impact model, but on a much smaller scale.

Bensley has partnered with Wildlife Alliance, The Royal University of Phnom Penh and the Cambodian government to create a public-private partnership to protect the area, while also creating long-term employment opportunities for local people. "Our goal is to be able to afford to police a greater and greater area in the Cardamom National Park." It's a tiny area, but he has "big-time plans".

On the opposite end of the scale is Tompkins Conservation, which recently became the largest private land donor in history. The foundation supports major conservation projects in South America, launched by the late North Face founder, Doug Tompkins, and continued by his wife, Kristine, today. Tompkins does conservation on a national scale, protecting and creating national parks in Chile and Argentina. In 2017, Kristine Tompkins signed an agreement with the President of Chile to expand national parkland by over 10 million acres. The gifted land was bigger than the size of Switzerland and created five new national parks. Last year, the resulting Route of Parks was established: a 1,740-mile route connecting 17 Chilean national parks.

African Parks uses a similar public-private partnership, bringing together donors and governments to take on the long-term management of national parks. It uses a business approach in its conservation model, with a focus on development and poverty alleviation, to ensure every park is ecologically, socially and financially sustainable in the long term. The backers range from the EU and WWF to private philanthropists and foundations, such as the Fentener van Vlissingen family and the Howard G Buffett Foundation.

When African Parks took over the management of Liuwa Plain National Park in Zambia in 2003, there was just one lion roaming the park. There's now a healthy pride, while cheetahs and hyenas are thriving once again. Africa's second-largest wildebeest migration comes thundering through here every year, attracting a new raft of tourists, who can stay at the recently opened King Lewanika Lodge, run by Time + Tide, where a room costs from US$1,420 (£1,115).

You don't have to cross the world to see high-end tourism supporting conservation. "Europe is undersold," says Paul Lister, the former furniture mogul and philanthropist who founded The European Nature Trust (TENT). He calls himself a treehugger and is passionate about protecting Europe's last tracks of virgin forest, half of which is in Romania and at risk from illegal logging. TENT recently launched trips to give visitors exclusive access to both the conservation areas and the people and foundations behind them — plus with the chance of spotting brown bears and wolves. "It's about getting people out there to see it. You have to see it to connect with it," Lister says.

While every trip has a £500-per-head supplement, which goes towards the foundations, his main aim is to connect people with wild places. Get a few high-net-worth individuals out there and show them what's happening, he hopes, and more large-scale donations will follow. TENT also operates trips to see rare Marsican brown bears in Abruzzo, Italy, and to Cantabria, Spain, to see Iberian wolves and chamois, while his Scottish retreat, Annadale, plans to reintroduce wolves. Wolves, he says, will bring in high-yield tourism, and create jobs. "We employ 10 people at the moment. With wolves, it would be more like 50."

It all comes back to client experience, commercial success and local employment. If high-end guests are willing to pay for exclusive access and experiences in pristine areas — whether that's dehorning a rhino, or diving in Indonesia — then the right operator or lodge owner can channel those funds to where they're needed most. But it has to work financially. It has to work on a local level, and it has to convince a local population that the land they want to graze, mine or farm will bring them more long-term revenue if turned over to tourism.

"To have genuinely successful, sustainable conservation you have to create shared, long-term economic value," &Beyond's Kent explains, "That means hard money flowing into communities at a local level. Training, community service support, and employment — that's the only answer".

THE BIG PICTURE

Five lodges making a difference

Grootbos, South Africa
This luxury eco-lodge, set above Walker Bay on the Western Cape, has helped to regenerate the area's fynbos and funds community projects a horticultural school. *grootbos.com*

Soneva Fushi, the Maldives
Soneva Fushi is carbon-neutral, the gardens are organic and the resort supports various community projects, including swimming lessons to local children. *soneva.com*

Wilderness Safaris
This adventure operator protects 6.2 million acres and has a raft of light-footprint camps, including North Island in the Seychelles. *wilderness-safaris.com*

Fogo Island Inn, Canada
Decked out with locally sourced interiors, this Newfoundland lodge is about employing and involving the local community. *fogoislandinn.ca*

Misool, Indonesia
Combining desert-island escapism with community-based conservation, this private island resort in Raja Ampat has created a marine reserve twice the size of Singapore. *misool.info*

MORE INFO

andbeyond.com
greatplainsconservation.com
singita.com
tedturnerexpeditions.com
virunga.org
africanparks.org
timeandtideafrica.com
thelongrun.org
explorationscompany.com
shintamani.com/wild.php
tompkinsconservation.org/home.htm
theeuropeannaturetrust.com
greatplainsconservation.com

IMAGE: GETTY

TOP THREE THINGS TO DO IN TUNIS

Using the Four Seasons Hotel Tunis as a base, here are three ways to use your time wisely in the ancient city of Tunis

IMAGE: RICHARD WAITE

AN HOUR

Soak in a hammam

This ancient tradition traces back to Roman times when public bathing was common throughout the empire. The Four Seasons in Tunis recreates this tradition in its spa, an oasis of calm where you can cleanse, refresh and rejuvenate with body masks and scrubs guided by hammam attendant Rym — experiencing one of the region's most sacred rituals.

AN AFTERNOON

Go wine tasting

Wine production in Tunisia dates back more than 2,000 years. Visitors can explore the Magon route, which starts in the capital Tunis and takes in archaeological sites and vineyards across northeast Tunisia. Alternatively, sample excellent local wine with the Four Seasons Hotel Tunis' sommelier Asma at the Creek Bistro Chic.

A DAY

Explore Carthage and Sidi Bou Said

A short drive from the hotel is the ancient city of Carthage. Founded as a Phoenician colony in the ninth century BC on the gulf of modern Tunis, the ruins of five Punic homes can still be seen on Byrsa Hill, alongside Roman baths and an amphitheatre. Nearby is the village of Sidi Bou Said, famous for its white buildings with blue roofs.

Essentials

A Superior Room at the Four Seasons Hotel Tunis starts from €260 (£224), plus tax. For more information and to book your stay, visit: *fourseasons.com/tunis*

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India is a country of ethnic culture, traditions and a vibrant new generation. A wide spectrum of cultural diversity thrives throughout the country from north to south and east to west. Gujarat is a glorious example of India's tradition of honouring its heritage, where people from all cultures, celebrate their diversity. Among the many culturally diverse festivals of Gujarat, the most eagerly awaited and universally acclaimed is the Festival of Dance, Navratri, meaning a celebration of nine days.

Worship and revelry go hand in hand and the gusto of the celebrations makes it a spellbinding spectacle found nowhere else. On the devotional side, nine manifestations of the goddess Amba are worshipped each of the nine nights of Navratri.

Navratri is one of the world's longest and most participatory dance festivals. Age, religion, gender and dancing skills are no bar for anyone to be part of the celebration. The premier dance of Navratri, the Garba, is performed around the garbo (a lit clay lantern). This lantern represents life, and the foetus in the womb. Dancing around this garbo is symbolic of celebrating the feminine form of divinity.

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It's not just a Dance Festival

There is perhaps no better time to visit and catch the pulse of Gujarat's throbbing cultural vibrancy than during Navratri. Over the nine nights people pour out into the open in their traditional dress and dance at street corners, fairgrounds, residential localities, clubs and colleges. Everyone is welcome to dance to the melodious Gujarati folk songs and indulge in the fine food of Gujarat, including the delicacies like jalebi, fafda and other traditional savouries. The energy during these nine nights is charmingly infectious. The excitement, music, dance, food, temple visits and the rich culture and vibrancy of the ancient Indian traditions unfurl over the nine days in an unforgettable festival.

When in Gujarat, dress as the GARBA LOVERS DO!

Dressing up for the occasion is surely the focus of the festival. Men and women turn out in their traditional outfits embellished with tiny mirrors, silk thread work, intricate embroidery, sequins and crystals. These attires are paired with traditional silver jewellery for women and with turbans for the men. The young and old put on their best ensemble and dance to their heart's content. The nine nights out in the open, with its magical ambience and vibrancy, can be a cherished memory of a lifetime for anyone, especially for visitors. Joyful expressions of deep devotion and contentment set the tone from the start to the finish. The feeling of fulfilment energises you for the rest of the year.

Everyone is invited to join us for Navratri, which will surely be the longest and the most unforgettable festival you have ever attended.

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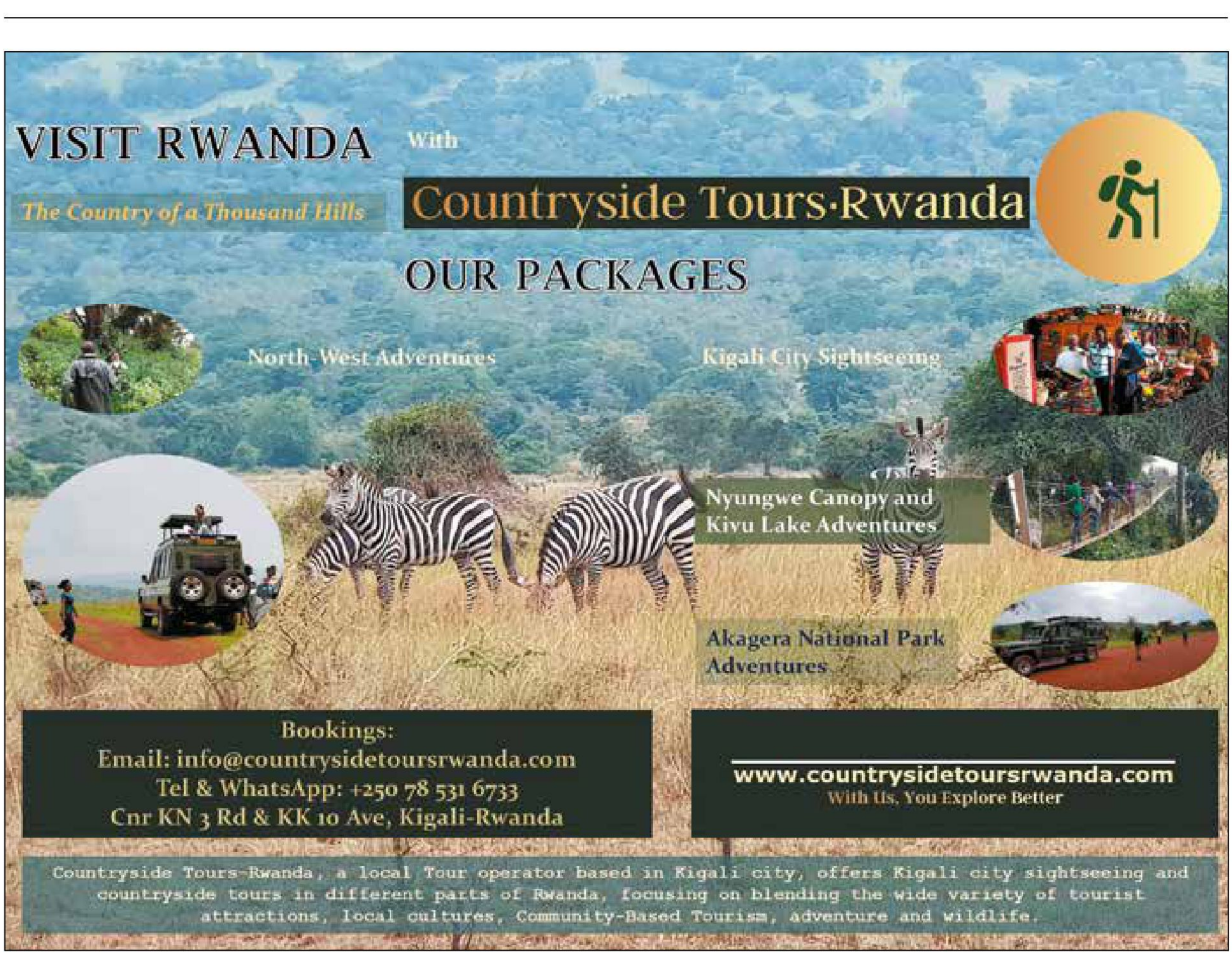
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Win

Next issue's Star Letter wins this new Antler luggage duo!

British-designed and engineered, Antler has been at the forefront of luggage innovation for over 100 years. Strong, stylish, lightweight and worth over £200, this new monochrome luggage duo includes the Juno II cabin bag made of durable polypropylene and the new, sleek Ampersand backpack that sits neatly over the case. *antler.co.uk*

★ STAR LETTER

Baby, it's great outside

We've recently been blessed with a new arrival to the family and were inspired by your article on maternity leave travelling (May 2019). Almost immediately after the baby was born, we packed up our camper van and headed off on a seat-of-your-nappy tour of Europe. Among the highlights we've seen so far include the Bay of Biscay, which included plenty of Brest feeding (sorry), stunning vistas in the Parc Naturel Regional des Landes de Gascogne, a whirlwind culinary adventure in San Sebastián and Bilbao. We now write to you overlooking the Palacio de la Magdalena from the Playa de Somo in sunny Santander. Our globetrotting baby, Isla, says hola and for your advice sends her warmest thanks. And spittle — always some spittle. **SAM RUSSELL**

Waste not, want not

I was intrigued by Aaron Millar's article in the June issue of your magazine, which looked at organisations in Patagonia that are trying to do something productive with the vast amounts of plastic waste we produce. I've long thought there must be some use for all this plastic — that it could be recycled or repurposed — so it was very encouraging to hear that companies are actually producing everything from skateboards to sunglasses from our waste. So much of what we read is doom and gloom these days, it was a pleasant change to come across an article with a positive outlook. **TOBY PALM**

Family matters

I'm really enjoying your new Traveller 10 section, especially the one from the May 2019 issue, which was all about family-friendly wildlife adventures. We have three children — two boys and a girl aged seven, 11 and 14 respectively — and trying to organise a holiday each summer that pleases everyone is no easy task and has sadly become something I dread. How I miss those early holidays when all it took was a beach and a bucket and spade each to keep the kids happy! Still, your Traveller 10 section has given me 10 fantastic ideas for some adventures this summer. Thank you! **ESTHER LOUISE MURPHY**

Competition

Win six novels by bestselling author Wilbur Smith!

To celebrate the paperback release of *Courtney's War*, as well as the rerelease of more than 30 of Smith's beloved novels, we're offering five lucky readers the chance to win a selection of his most captivating reads, including *On Leopard Rock*, *When The Lion Feeds* and *Those in Peril*. Enter now at *nationalgeographic.co.uk/competitions*

IMAGE: GETTY

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